



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

MINUTES AND VERBATIM REPORT



No. 2 — December 11 & 12, 1997

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Hon. Glenn Hagel, Chair
Moose Jaw North

Bill Boyd
Kindersley

Hon. Joanne Crofford
Regina Centre

Myron Kowalsky
Prince Albert Carlton

Hon. Eldon Lautermilch
Prince Albert Northcote

Harvey McLane
Arm River

Grant Whitmore
Saskatoon Northwest

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Room 10 Legislative Building
6:26 p.m. Thursday, December 11, 1997

Present: Members of the Board of Internal Economy

Hon. Glenn Hagel, Chair
Mr. Bill Boyd
Hon. Joanne Crofford
Mr. Myron Kowalsky
Hon. Eldon Lautermilch
Mr. Harvey McLane
Mr. Grant Whitmore

Staff to the Board

Gwenn Ronyk, Clerk
Deborah Saum, Secretary

Officials in Attendance**Office of the Provincial Auditor**

Wayne Strelieff, Provincial Auditor
Fred Wendel, Assistant Provincial Auditor
Sandra Walker, Manager of Administration
Heather Tomlin, Assistant Manager of Administration

Office of the Provincial Ombudsman

Barbara Tomkins, Provincial Ombudsman
Murray Knoll, Assistant Ombudsman

Office of the Children's Advocate

Deborah Parker-Loewen, Children's Advocate

AGENDA Moved by Mr. Kowalsky, seconded by Ms. Crofford, that the proposed agenda be adopted. Agreed.

MINUTES Moved by Ms. Crofford, seconded by Mr. McLane, ordered, that the Minutes of Meeting #1/97 be adopted. Agreed.

ITEM 1 **Table Item – Audited Financial Statements and Schedule of Assets of the Government, Opposition and Third Party Caucuses for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1997, and Final Audited Financial Statements and Schedule of Assets of the Progressive Conservative Caucus for the Period April 1, 1997 to August 7, 1997**

The Chair tabled the Audited Financial Statements and Schedule of Assets of the New Democratic Party, the Liberal Party, and the Progressive Conservative Party Caucuses for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1997 and of the Progressive Conservative Party Caucus for April 1, 1997 to August 7, 1997.

Moved by Mr. McLane, seconded by Mr. Boyd:

That the details of employee severance payments at the winding up of the Progressive Conservative Caucus be provided to the Board by the former Progressive Conservative Caucus Chair.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1418

ITEM 2 **Table Item – Members Accountability and Disclosure Reports for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1997**

The Chair tabled the reports.

ITEM 3 **Table Item – Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly's "Racial, Ethnic and Gender Harassment Policy"**

The Chair tabled the policy.

Ms. Crofford asked the Chair to forward a copy of this policy to all Legislative Building tenants for their information, as they may be affected.

ITEM 4**Decision Item - Review of the 1998-99 Budget for the Office of the Provincial Auditor**

Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. Kowalsky:

That the Provincial Auditor be requested to revise his "Business and Financial Plan" for 1998-99 to reflect a 2% decrease from 1997-98, and further;

That the reduction should not be offset by increased fees in charges to government agencies, and further;

That this revision should not result in a reduction of audits required by the Provincial Auditor's Act, and further;

That this revision be made for consideration at a future Board of Internal Economy meeting.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

ITEM 5**Decision Item - Review of the 1998-99 Budget for the Offices of the Provincial Ombudsman and Children's Advocate****Provincial Ombudsman**

Moved by Ms. Crofford, seconded by Mr. Whitmore:

That the 1998-99 Estimates of the Provincial Ombudsman be approved, as submitted, in the amount of \$1,262,000;

And that such Estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1419

Children's Advocate

Moved by Mr. Kowalsky, seconded by Ms. Crofford:

That the 1998-99 Estimates for the Children's Advocate be approved, as submitted, in the amount of \$782,785;

And that such Estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1420

At 10:18 p.m., the meeting adjourned until 9 a.m. December 12, 1997.

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Room 10 Legislative Building
9:12 a.m. Friday, December 12, 1997

Present: Members of the Board of Internal Economy

Hon. Glenn Hagel, Chair
Mr. Bill Boyd
Hon. Joanne Crofford
Mr. Myron Kowalsky
Hon. Eldon Lautermilch
Mr. Grant Whitmore

Staff to the Board

Marilyn Borowski, Director, Financial Services
Greg Putz, Deputy Clerk
Gwenn Ronyk, Clerk
Deborah Saum, Secretary

Officials in Attendance

Office of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Bob Cosman, Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk
Judy Brennan, Assistant Legislative Librarian
Chris Hecht, Systems Administrator
Linda Kaminski, Director of Personnel and Administrative Services
Marian Powell, Legislative Librarian
Gary Ward, Director of Broadcasting

ITEM 6 Decision Item - Special Warrant Request for 1997-98 Fiscal Year for the Legislative Assembly, Office of the Ombudsman and Office of the Children's Advocate

Moved by Mr. Whitmore, seconded by Ms. Crofford:

That the Special Warrant request for Legislation Vote 021 for the 1997-98 fiscal year, in the amount of \$310,000, be approved.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1421

ITEM 7 Decision Item - Review of the 1998-99 Budget for the Legislative Assembly:

ITEM 7(a) Review Budget Document

The Board reviewed the Budget submission in amount of \$14,800,320.

Budgetary Estimates

The Board agreed to meet "in camera" at 10:45 a.m. for Security matters and Item 7(b), Personnel Request.

ITEM 7(b) Personnel Request (in camera)

The Board resumed Public meetings at 11:52 a.m.

Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Ms. Crofford:

That, effective April 1, 1998, the following positions be converted to permanent status:

Supervisor, Administrative Operations
Manager of Accounting
Hansard, Production Manager
Computer Systems Analyst

That the Legislative Assembly work with PSC to determine appropriate classification levels, and that the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly approve the classification levels for each position.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1422

Moved by Mr. Whitmore, seconded by Mr. Boyd:

That, effective April 1, 1998, the position of Administrative Assistant to the Speaker be reclassified to Intermediate Ministerial Assistant and that the position title be changed to Assistant to the Speaker, and;

That, effective April 1, 1998, the position of Secretary, Office of the Speaker be reclassified to Ministerial Assistant Intermediate Secretary and that the position title be changed to Secretary to the Speaker.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1423

ITEM 8

Decision Item – Consideration of the Provincial Auditor’s Memoranda on the Board of Internal Economy Audits for the Years Ending March 31, 1996 and March 31, 1997

Moved by Mr. Kowalsky, seconded by Mr. Whitmore:

That the draft response to the Provincial Auditor’s memoranda be approved and that the Chair forward it to the Office of the Provincial Auditor.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1424

ITEM 9

Decision Item –Employee and Family Assistance Plan for Members

Moved by Ms. Crofford, seconded by Mr. Lautermilch:

That in keeping with standard policies in government and business, Members and their families be eligible to participate in the Legislative Assembly Employees and Family Assistance Plan.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1425

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

The Chair: — Ladies and gentlemen of the board, let me call the meeting to order and refer you to our agenda.

And I, before proceeding through the agenda, just remind everyone, because there was an error in the communication too, the intention is that we would start tomorrow at 9 o'clock. Some were advised 8 and so it's 9.

It would be in order — you have the agenda that has been distributed to you, the proposed agenda — and it would be in order to have a motion to adopt the agenda. Kowalsky, seconded by Crofford. Discussion? In favour? Opposed? And that's carried.

Moving along then to item no. 1, which is a tabling item, formally table with you, the audited financial statements and schedule of assets of all three caucuses — the government, opposition, and third party caucuses for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1997. And along with that as well, the final audited financial statement and schedule of assets of the Progressive Conservative caucus for the period April 1, 1997 to August 7, 1997, related to the winding-up of the caucus.

You have copies of that that you've received, and I formally table those with the board now and advise you that as required by the directive, when the House meets next week, those will be tabled in the Assembly. And they are available, as the directive indicates, for viewing in the Clerk's office as well as in the caucus offices.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, I just have a question. Who submitted the Saskatchewan Progressive Conservative caucus office financial statements? I note they were received on September 23. Was that party at rest at that time or were they active?

The Chair: — On September 23?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — September 23.

The Chair: — Yes, it was submitted by the previous caucus.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — They were active at that time?

The Chair: — No. No, but the directive that came into play was the directive that related to the winding-up of a caucus, and it was carried out, with the responsibility of the former caucus Chair to ensure that the caucus met its obligations. So it was in that context that it was provided. Obviously after it wound up there wasn't an active caucus any longer. On the moment that the Saskatchewan Party caucus was recognized was the same moment at which then the Progressive Conservative caucus ceased to be recognized. And those two changes took place simultaneously.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Who was the caucus Chair of the Conservative Party?

The Chair: — Mr. D'Autremont was the caucus Chair, yes.

I understand I am recognizing before I proceed any further, that I failed to deal with the minutes before moving to item no. 1. I

should, in our minutes, before actually formally proceeding to item no. 1, refer you to your minutes for meeting no. 1/97 and you have them recommended to you as accurate by the secretary and myself. Is there any questions related to the minutes? Questions or corrections? And if not, it would in order to have a motion to adopt those. Crofford. Is there a seconder? McLane. Thank you. Discussion? In favour? Opposed? And that's carried.

Now, sorry. Let us continue on item no. 1. Is there anything more on item no. 1?

Mr. McLane: — Yes, have the appropriate funds been returned to the Assembly?

The Chair: — Yes they have. Yes.

Mr. McLane: — And that amount is . . .

The Chair: — Just let me check here. You will find this in your book under item no. 1 and the precise amount is \$28,097.91. There is a question, Mr. McLane, as to whether it's 81 cents or 91 cents. I can't be precise and I don't have my letter acknowledging the receipt of it in front of me. If you'll accept it within that amount of accuracy and then . . . \$28,097 and either 81 or 91 cents. I've got two items, two in front and I'm not sure which one was the accurate one.

Mr. McLane: — Would it be appropriate to ask the question, as part of the wind-up of that party, if there were indeed severances paid to the employees of the Conservative caucus party?

The Chair: — Provided for that? The directive that was applied in the winding-up of the affairs of the caucus provided for the meeting of all employee obligations before the funds are returned and I was advised with the return of the funds that all employee obligations had been met. And then the auditor's report would have allowed for those in the expenses that were reported to the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. McLane: — So is there a breakdown available to the Assembly as of the 83,000 that was spent on salaries and benefits?

The Chair: — That's the audited report and it's a . . . the auditor would have been working with the directive and the requirement in giving his authority to the audited report, so this is . . . What was reported to the Legislative Assembly would have been in the format that would be considered to be standard and not unusual.

Any other questions? Okay. Oh sure, Mr. Lautermilch.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Is it possible to get a breakdown of the salaries, the severance, and to whom they were paid?

The Chair: — The Legislative Assembly is not in a position to provide it. That is not information that is required. And if that were to be provided then it would . . . it's not normal to require it through the directive.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Then can the board request that?

The Chair: — Yes, it would be within the authority of the board to request that.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Could we then have copies of that?

The Chair: — Of?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Of the severance, the amounts paid, and to whom they were paid, and when they were paid.

The Chair: — That would have to be put into a motion form and approved by the board in order to require that to be done. Are you moving?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'll move that.

The Chair: — I'll give the secretary a moment to formulate the motion as you, as I think you've stated it, and then I'll give it to the board and ask for a seconder. If I interpret what you've asked for, Mr. Lautermilch . . . let me translate that to a motion, and then ask if that's what you wish to move and then seek a seconder, if it is:

That the details of employee severance payments at the winding-up of the Progressive Conservative caucus be provided to the Board of Internal Economy by the former PC caucus Chair.

Is that the motion you wish to move?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm not sure if the Chair should be providing . . . would not the Legislative Assembly Office be providing it? Or did I misinterpret?

The Chair: — The Legislative Assembly is not in a position to provide it because the information received by the Legislative Assembly, which is in a standard format and within the requirements of the directive, does not provide that amount of detail. So that information doesn't exist within the Legislative Assembly. And that payment would not have been made by the Legislative Assembly Office. That would have been . . . those kinds of payments would be made by a caucus directly.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay. I'll let that go for now. I won't move that motion at this point.

The Chair: — Okay. Is there any further question or discussion related to item no. 1?

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Chairman, could I ask you to repeat the, could I ask you to repeat that motion, please?

The Chair: —

That the details of employee severance payments at the winding-up of the Progressive Conservative caucus be provided to the board by the former PC caucus Chair.

Mr. McLane: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd move that motion.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Chair, I'd be prepared to second it.

The Chair: — Okay. Okay, it is moved and seconded. Then you have before you, and let me just repeat it here because you don't have it in writing:

That the details of employee severance payments at the winding-up of the Progressive Conservative caucus be provided to the board by the former PC caucus Chair.

Moved by McLane, seconded by Boyd. Is there discussion on that motion?

There being none, those in favour please indicate. Down hands. Opposed? And that is carried.

Is there anything else on item no. 1? Okay. That's an information item so it needs no further attention.

Moving to item no. 2, I formally table with you the members' accountability and disclosure reports for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1997. As you know, this is required by board directive. I have not physically tabled them with you because the mound of paper, taking all of the members' individual reports and putting them together, would be monumental, but they have been filed with the Speaker's office and are available for viewing in the Clerk's office, as well as in each member's own constituency office. And those will be tabled next week at the sitting of the Legislative Assembly, the first sitting after their tabling.

So I formally table those with you. Again that's an information item, not a decision item. Is there any question, discussion, on that item? Then there being none, we'll move to item no. 3.

Item no. 3 being the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly's racial, ethnic, and gender harassment policy. You will recall that just about exactly a year ago on December 16 of last year, there was a motion approved by the board that the Chair finalize the policy and implement it for legislative employees and that the approved policy be tabled in the board at a subsequent meeting.

And that is what I'm doing now, and you find that in your books as item no. 3. It has been in place in the Legislative Assembly here and operative now as of early 1997, so we've had nearly a year of experience with the harassment policy. You will note that the harassment policy, although it is written for and applies to employees of the Legislative Assembly Office, it also contemplates the exposure to harassment by persons who are not employees of the Legislative Assembly Office. And I simply advise you, as I suspect you are already aware, that certainly would mean that it would be possible to have a complaint brought against an employee of your own caucus, for example, or member of the Legislative Assembly or someone who deals with the building from the outside. And that I point out that in the policy itself, that complaints which could involve members of the Legislative Assembly would be dealt with by the Speaker.

I point out as well that the new occupational health and safety regulations which were proclaimed on December 4 of last year, require employers to have a harassment policy in all workplaces. And the definition of employer is — I understand it — means:

A person, firm, or association or body that has, in connection with the operation of a place of employment, one or more workers in the service of the person, firm, association, or body.

And as I had said to you when we discussed this a year ago — and you gave the approval to proceed with the implementation at my discretion — that I would certainly be happy to meet with your caucuses and to work together with your caucuses or together with our Clerk and your caucuses, should you be interested in looking at having in place a harassment policy in your own workplace that could mesh or be broader than what it is now in the Legislative Assembly Office *per se*. I simply make that offer to you and leave that in your capable hands.

And then table with you the statement of the policy which you have in detail, as well as a couple of guidebooks that have been distributed, one to employees regarding complaints, and then one as well to managers that outlines in summary form the obligations of management within the Legislative Assembly Office in dealing with harassment.

So this is before you, as again, not a decision item. You made the decision last year, but I table with you as an information item and report on the progress, since we dealt with it last at our board.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was just wondering, did these go to our staff already, or they would have to be requested?

The Chair: — They have not gone to your staff because they don't . . .

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, they're not within the legislative staff.

The Chair: — That's right.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I understand that. So any extension beyond there, somebody else would have to send those around.

The Chair: — That's right. If you wish we could easily do that. But they have not been distributed to staff beyond Legislative Assembly Office staff, who are covered by this policy.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I certainly think if they could be affected by it, then they certainly should be aware of it and should read it. So whatever, I guess, channels you might need to go through to just ensure that happens, I would move that we do that.

The Chair: — Okay. I'll just simply take that as guidance and move it. Anybody literally can be affected by the policy of course, because it is to provide protection against harassment for employees of the LAO (Legislative Assembly Office) from anyone, either their own colleagues or outside. So it would be impossible to literally distribute to everybody who could be affected by it, but we will be happy to circulate them to the caucus offices.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask a question about the interpretation of the policy, particularly as to

the onus it places on anybody that would be in management and whether or not we may not be . . . my question is whether we may not be binding management into a very awkward position.

And I refer to this booklet, manager's guide, on page . . . I'm not sure what page it is here; they're not numbered. The second last page that's titled, "Question." What if an employee makes a complaint and then decides he or she does not want any action taken? Now the response here is generally you should respect the wishes of the complainant. However, management has an obligation — it uses the word "an obligation" — to act in serious cases such as sexual assault if you are aware of other incidents involving the same offender.

I guess there's actually two things here. First of all, I believe sexual assault doesn't even fall under this policy. I believe sexual assault to be a criminal act and is not a good example to use. But nevertheless, let's just say that there has been a case of serious harassment that has been reported. And it says that management has an obligation to act in such cases if you are aware of other incidents involving the same offender. In these cases you may decide to deal with the complaint or proceed with a formal complaint or even . . . even if it is against the wishes of the complainant.

Now you should tell the complainant why you are pursuing the complaint. If a manager goes and tells a complainant that the manager is going to proceed with the complaint, and the complainant . . . or the person who lodges the complaint in the first place listens and says, no I would prefer you would not because if you did so, it would do further damage or would damage my reputation . . . his or her reputation, or whatever.

Now can this be interpreted that the manager can stop there? In other words, it would be optional for the manager to pursue it further or not. Because if the manager does proceed to lodge the complaint formally, against the wishes of the person who made the complaint in the first place, could the manager not be sued for doing so, particularly if further damage is done.

And I wondered if we couldn't have another look at this to make sure that we really mean that the manager has the obligation, as opposed to just having the option, or whether the manager still has the obligation to follow up after advising the person involved that they feel that they should pursue.

The Chair: — Perhaps I can respond in a bit more general terms in terms of the policy, and ask that the Clerk add to that. It is not by error that it's listed here. It is intentionally part of the policy, and that it is intended that management must assume responsibility to ensure a harassment-free workplace, that being part of the what I would interpret as the obligation vis-à-vis The Occupational Health and Safety Act. And recognizing that at times it can be the reality that someone who is the victim of harassment may, as part of that experience, experience extreme fear for retribution. And that at the end of the day, management cannot ignore its obligation to ensure a harassment-free workplace.

Obviously there is a significant element of judgement that's required by the manager in this circumstance, but let me perhaps stop there and ask the Clerk to comment further.

Ms. Ronyk: — I think the Speaker was correct, that this does give some discretion. However it has to be there because the managers need to be aware that, under the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code and The Occupational Health and Safety Act, the manager can be held responsible for failing to exercise his or her authority to maintain a harassment-free workplace.

So the managers is . . . the word “obligation” is indeed an obligation. They are . . . you have a positive obligation as management to provide a workplace free of harassment. And there are lots of cases, Supreme Court and other jurisdictions, that enforce that.

So the manager has that judgement to make, whether this is an obligation that should be followed or whether they can respect the concerns of the individual. But the manager’s obligations go beyond the particular incident because a manager has an obligation to prevent it from happening again to perhaps some other individual; so it’s a little broader than the needs of that specific, individual person.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Under those conditions, is the manager protected from being taken to court for proceeding against the wishes of a person who may claim that because the manager proceeded, the original complainant was further harmed?

Ms. Ronyk: — I believe the manager is protected as long as he or she has not acted maliciously; but because the regulations put that obligation on the manager, if they have followed the proper process and that it was a situation that merited intervention, they will be protected. They have followed their obligations. But in any of these situations, if something is done maliciously there they can be sued or have legal proceedings against them.

The Chair: — Is there anything else related to the policy or the management of it within the LAO?

Thank you very much for your interest and your questions and your support on that.

That completes item no. 3 and moves us now to item 4, which is a decision item, the review of the 1998-99 budget for the Office of the Provincial Auditor. And for this portion of the meeting, I will be calling in just a very short moment, the Provincial Auditor, Wayne Strelieff, and the assistant auditor, Fred Wendel, who are here as well assisted by Sandy Walker, the manager of administration, and the assistant manager of administration, Heather Tomlin.

I think Mr. Strelieff and Mr. Wendel are planning to take their places at the front of the table, and I’ll slide to the side here then and ask the Provincial Auditor then to present his budget proposal. And you will have item no. 4 in your materials, the budget proposal.

So if everyone is ready to proceed, I will ask Mr. Strelieff to proceed in presenting the budget proposal to you. And I think it would be our usual practice to save most of, if not all of, your questions till he gets a chance to make his proposal and then we’ll deal with your questions. Unless you really desire strongly to interrupt the proposal, maybe I can just ask you to catch my eye and we’ll make a speakers’ list. How’s that grab you?

Mr. Strelieff: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good evening. We have provided you our ’98-99 business plan. We have extra copies if they’re needed, and also we have extra copies of our ’96-97 annual report, which we also provided you and of course published last June. As you probably guess, we try to improve the contents of our plans and reports each year and as we expect others to do the same.

The ’98-99 plan has three components. The first component begins on page 1 in which we describe what we do and why as well as our financial proposal for this year, next year, and the previous three years.

The second component of our plan begins on page 33 in which we provide more detailed financial information, including a five-year summary of our spending as well as more detailed information about our work plans. And the third component begins on page 49 in which we provide answers to questions posed previously by members of this board.

Turning to page 5, in the first paragraph, we state that we request an appropriation of \$4.314 million for 1998-99. This request is about 2 per cent more than our appropriation for ’97-98, which if you can remember last year was about 2 per cent less than the appropriation that we proposed and was approved for ’96-97. The 2 per cent increase relates to there being more government organizations created during the past year. And the proposal plans to . . . states that we plan to absorb inflationary increases related to the costs of extended health plans, dental plans, CPP (Canada Pension Plan), telecommunications, energy, travel, and of course other kinds of supplies.

I plan to provide you an overview of the plan in terms of two sections. First I will review our office in terms of what we do, our plans, and how we assess our own performance. And then I’ll review the ’98-99 financial plan.

On page 7, exhibit 1, we provide an overview of what we do in terms of the inputs, outputs, and intermediate outcomes and final outcomes. It’s a chart that was developed by a national group of legislative auditors and that we work with in terms of explaining what we do and also assessing our own performance.

The exhibit shows that our key inputs, of course are . . . we’re staff oriented. The key input is the knowledge, skills, and abilities of our employees. So of course one of the key issues that we face constantly is to manage carefully our staff and create the necessary environment that encourages and rewards ongoing learning and performance.

The exhibit shows that we have three key outputs. First we provide assurances to legislators, government officials, and the public on the reliability of financial information prepared by government organizations, compliance with the legislative authorities that you as legislators create and the adequacy of the management systems and practices in place in organizations.

The second output is that we provide advice, mainly through our recommendations to legislators and government officials. And lastly, the third output is that we train professionals for public service. Our ultimate goal in terms of the final outcomes is to have better parliamentary control, better program

performance, and of course improve the public confidence in our institutions of government.

Page 8 explains the nature of our examinations, our reports to government organizations, to the ministers responsible, and to the Assembly, the impacts of our work and reports, and the knowledge, skills, and abilities that we bring to the table when we carry out our work, which is on page 11.

Our organization, beginning on page 12, we describe that we have a staff of about 60 people organized into five groups. At any time, we have about 15 to 20 articling students, articling for their chartered accountancy, their certified general accountancy, or their certified management accounting degree or designation, and about 35 professional accountants. The last time I checked, our average age was about 35 years old, and we have about 50 per cent of our people are women; 50 per cent of the people are men.

Recently we did reorganize our office. The chart on page 12 shows that I have one of my senior executive directors, Brian Atkinson, working on several long-term strategic issues that face our office over the next year or two. He's going to be examining those issues. Those issues relate to the changing nature of how government organizations are putting in place management controls, the change in professional guidance that's provided to us as auditors and how to assess those controls, and the changing expectations of public sector organizations on how they demonstrate or are expected to demonstrate their performance. These changes are having a significant impact on government organizations, and they certainly are having an impact on the work of our office.

I also have assigned each of our operating groups a key portfolio to focus on. As you can see on page 12, there's an executive director that focuses on gaming and insurance, an executive director that focuses on education, one on health, and one on finance and Crown corporations.

A third part of the reorganization was to integrate our IT (information technology) expertise, which was before carried out as a staff function. We're integrating it into the groups, each of the operating groups. Page 14 sets out what we plan to do in terms of our goals, objectives, strategies, and performance indicators. The next six pages sets out the three goals of our office, and for each goal the objectives, the strategies that we have in place to moving those objectives forward, the actual action plans for this next year, and the performance indicators we use to monitor our performance.

Of course, in our annual report that we provided you, we report on our performance. So the first page 14 and 15 describes the first goal, which is intended to help foster well-managed government. The second goal, on page 16 and 17, focuses on encouraging good reporting by government organizations to legislators and the public. And the third goal focuses internally, making sure that we are trying to manage our own business as effectively as possible.

And you can see the three objectives there: the strategies, the action plans, and the performance indicators we use to monitor our own performance and report on it.

On page 20 we talk about the values that we try to hold on to regardless of what challenges, criticisms, and issues we face on an ongoing basis which, as you can imagine given the nature of our responsibilities, can be sometimes quite difficult. On page 20 we also describe some of the factors that affect our work plan.

Page 21, several of the key forces and trends that affect those who we work with, those who we work for, and therefore affect our own work. The first force being the constant, increasing pressure on public resources. The second one, the transfer of decision making, service delivery, financial management closer to the community. It affects our work by focusing on the service agreements that organizations have with those organizations they fund, and whether those service agreements are rigorous enough, setting out the expectations and performance requirements.

The next force is the constant demand for improving public accountability. How it affects our office are issues like the ongoing pressure to make sure that our reports and work is done on a more timely basis. As you might know, we finished our work on the government's *Public Accounts* last year about a month earlier than the year before.

Or health districts: most of the . . . probably two-thirds of the health districts were able to produce their audited financial statements by the end of June. So it's the constant pressure — the more powerful and user-friendly technology, the year 2000 issues and the ongoing change to more sophisticated IT systems, the increasing concern about the effect of society and our environment. For example, the Saskatchewan Research Council has a slowpoke reactor. One of the issues they face is how much money to set aside for decommissioning costs.

On page 23, sets out the systems and practices that we have in place to make sure that we achieve our goals and objectives. Those systems relate to the quality of our work, what we do to ensure that we're identifying and reporting opportunities to improve performance reports and management systems and practices, and to ensure that our work covers all government organizations.

Page 25 sets out how we measure our own performance. And once again, our annual report, that we provided you, is a report on that performance.

Now that leads us to the financial plan for this year. Beginning on page 27, we set out and describe the cost of our work.

The first table on page 28, we report the costs of one year of auditing is now 4.394 million and that would be one year . . . auditing of one year of government organizations for the activities that take place between July 1, '97 to June 30, '98 because that would be the year that we would be examining, in '98-99.

On page 30, we show our spending trends and how we finance our spending for a five-year period.

We also explain on page 30 and 31 that we do maintain a net financial asset balance equal to about one month of our costs. This way we can respond to unanticipated issues of the day,

new organizations being created, pressures to change our timelines and deadlines, and of course, changes in management systems and practices that occur during the year.

Page 31 sets out how we would adjust our work if sufficient funding is not available to our office. I am certainly pleased to note that for the past three years now you, as a Board of Internal Economy, has supported our funding proposals.

As I stated earlier, in Appendix 1 we provide more detailed information about our spending and work plans. In Appendix 2, we provide answers to questions previously posed by the members of this board.

And that ends my opening overview of the proposal, and certainly I'm here to answer any questions you may have. So thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Strelieff. And the floor is now open for questions. And following the questions that you would like to address to the auditor and through him to his staff, then it will be appropriate to consider a motion regarding approval of the estimates for the Provincial Auditor 1998-99, and the amount requested is the precise amount of \$4.314 million.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Auditor, I have to compliment you on the reports that you are providing us. Usually stuff that I'm looking for when I — maybe just because I'm getting used to it — but when I get into one of your reports and I find it not that difficult to find, and it's clear and in clear language and also fairly direct, I'm finding as well, and I appreciate that.

Last year when we were discussing the budgetary items here, you may recall as we went through it you proposed a 2 per cent decrease. And I think, if I remember correctly, we complimented you on that. And you also committed at that time to go to a further 2 per cent for this year.

I would like to see you . . . I would like to see a proposal from you, you know, on an additional 2 per cent decrease following last year's plan. I say that on the basis of, first of all, I think we set the right plan last year. There's a sort of a expectation . . . we're getting increasing expectations in the public in general, you know, people saying well you've balanced the budget for four years, obviously all kinds of money. And yet we're finding that with costs within the departments that the budget doesn't really allow for a heck of a lot of increased spending. I think we're projecting 24 million out of a total budget this year which is in the \$5 billion range.

And also when I look at the trend of public spending, spending other than on interest, the spending in departments has tended to decrease, I believe, since '92. It's gone on a downward spiral . . . or down not a spiral, but it's been continually decreasing. And we did yours, in the case of the auditor, the auditor's spending did not decrease until, I think it was last year. So I'd like to see that looked at and brought back to us in the future.

But I also have a couple of other questions that I would like answered. It has to do with your budget which in '98-99, I believe your request is for 4.314 million, and that's actually less than your spending estimate of 4.394. And I ask what authority

is that . . . on which you can spend more than you're appropriated by the Board of Internal Economy?

Mr. Strelieff: — Mr. Kowalsky, the Standing Committee on Estimates asked us that question last May or June, and we did table a report to them explaining the nature of the authority we have to spend more than our appropriation. If you wish us to provide you that report, we can certainly do that.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Okay. If it's in there, would you also answer whether that same report might grant you . . . what the authority that you have to retain excess funds?

Mr. Strelieff: — Yes, we certainly will have a look at that.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Is it possible for you to give us that response at this time, verbally? Referring . . . Do you have that material with you?

Mr. Strelieff: — We have been asked this question before, either in Standing Committee of Estimates or Board of Internal Economy, and have provided legal advice and views on our ability to charge fees and to retain and use those fees. My assistant, Mr. Wendel, does have a copy of the report that we provided the Standing Committee on Estimates in June of last year, if you would like . . .

Mr. Kowalsky: — Could you read the response then. It's available there.

Mr. Strelieff: — Okay. So the letter, the covering letter, is to Ms. Hamilton, Doreen Hamilton, the Chair of the Standing Committee on Estimates, and it says:

Dear Ms. Hamilton:

As requested at the May 8, 1997 meeting of the Standing Committee on Estimates, I provide you with information that our revenue raising and spending practices comply with the law.

And then it's signed, me. The opening paragraphs say that:

The purpose of this report is to provide information the Standing Committee on Estimates requested from us on May 8, 1997. The committee wanted assurance that our revenue raising and spending practices comply with the law. We think the committee can rely on the assurances the Assembly receives from the auditor of our office. That auditor reports whether or not our revenue raising and spending practices comply with the law.

On page 49 of our annual report on operations for the year ended March 31, 1997, we include the auditor's report assuring the Assembly that our revenue raising and spending practices comply with the law.

Also, our lawyer thinks we have the authority to raise revenue and spend that revenue to carry out our work.

This report includes our lawyer's opinions on this matter. And then we include two of our lawyers' opinions that pertains to the questions that were posed by the Standing Committee on

Estimates. One is dated October 7, 1992 and one is dated February 19, 1993. Do you want me to read the legal opinions?

Mr. Kowalsky: — Do the opinions provide any reference to any specific regulation or legislation such as the auditor's Act or do they refer to general practice?

Mr. Strelieff: — Mr. Kowalsky, they are the opinions of our lawyer . . . Focus is on The Provincial Auditor Act. And what responsibilities and authorities are contained in that Act.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Have you given any consideration to returning surpluses to the General Revenue Fund as other departments do, or would it be in your intention to maintain . . . to keep any surpluses into the future?

Mr. Strelieff: — As I stated in my overview, our plan for the last three or four years has been to maintain a net financial asset balance equal to about one month of our costs. And this way we can respond to unanticipated issues of the day.

To new organizations that when we prepared this plan, which is prepared in October, that are created during our audits to unanticipated pressures or requests to change our time lines.

For example, some time in January, February I'll be going to Treasury Board with an audit planning proposal setting out when we are to get the work done for the government's financial statements. And if Treasury Board requests a different time line, I mean, we can respond to those kinds of pressures and also unanticipated changes in the management systems and practices in place by the government.

For example, my understanding is that even right now the Department of Finance is considering revamping what's called the RES (revenue and expenditure system) system, their expenditure management system which is a complex IT or an information technology project that would require a different attention by our office. So our target in terms of managing our office is to maintain net financial assets equal to about one month of our costs so we can respond.

Mr. Kowalsky: — There's a reference in here, Mr. Strelieff, in section 4 about advising members of how we can access the effectiveness of this business plan and it suggests working . . . do work with the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. Just for clarification, I don't believe that you are suggesting that the Public Accounts Committee should review your budget. Are you in that section?

Mr. Strelieff: — Mr. Kowalsky, as you might remember we have made this business and financial plan available to all members. And thinking that if members of this committee or members of the Public Accounts Committee — sorry — members of this board wish to obtain the advice of members of the Public Accounts Committee on whether our office is effective, could be made better, that's one reason that we provided the business and financial plan to all members. Members of the Public Accounts Committee may also want to approach you in terms of providing you advice.

And also if the Standing Committee on Public Accounts wants to review our business and financial plan or our annual reports,

I mean that would be up to them. And certainly we would be more than happy to answer their questions.

But the first stage is, first step, is to make sure that all members have access to our business and financial plan. So that if you have questions about what we do — we certainly work a lot more closely with the Public Accounts Committee — and so you may want to approach them, members of that committee, and ask them about how we carry out our job. Or the other way around.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I understand the communication aspect and the advice there is well taken. It's just I wanted to clarify whether or not, and I believe you've answered the question, that budget appropriation is properly done in this committee rather than the other committee.

Right now there's a bit of a change in target with respect to the health boards, and I think what you've been doing with the health boards . . . could you give us a bit of a brief overview on how your auditing practices have changed over the last year or two as you're dealing with health boards? And what kind of a mix here you've got now with the independent auditors of the health board and your audits.

It's a pretty open question.

Mr. Strelieff: — Mr. Kowalsky, members, we have devoted a lot of attention to health districts over the past few years right from the beginning of them being created and wanting to make sure that as they reorganize they put in places rigorous management information systems both designed to report internally and externally as possible.

Initially we were examining, I think, just maybe six or seven of the health districts and thinking . . . And coming into a meeting of the Board of Internal Economy maybe three or four years ago, the board said that they wanted us to examine . . . participate in the examinations of all health districts so we took that direction and have been doing those . . . have been involved all 30 health districts for the last two or three years.

We, the Department of Health . . . we carry out our . . . we oversee the examinations of the health districts carried out directly by public accounting firms appointed by health districts. And with the support of the Department of Health, we've been using the protocols that we have established for other organizations when another auditor is involved in the examinations.

So we've been, for the last two or three years, we've been involved in the audits of all health districts making sure that as they improve their practices they learn from each other and know what's going on across the province and making sure that as things as basic as financial statements are prepared and prepared in a rigorous and comparable manner.

We are planning for this '98-99 year to do . . . spend less effort at doing direct work at each of the health districts. We are planning to focus still on the two big ones, Saskatoon and Regina, to make sure that we're at the two new ones, which are the two northern ones that are being established, and then select a number of other ones based on their size and our experience

with the quality of their current management practices. And particularly the information that is being provided to boards of directors to make sure that that all health districts have rigorous good performance information provided to their boards and then also of course publicly.

So for this '98-99 year we are changing our approach, or proposing to change our approach, in the health district community, and we do that in other sectors. For example, this proposal also envisions that we're going to pay more attention to a couple of the revenue systems within the Department of Finance, do a more in-depth examination there. But we're going to move back somewhat on the health districts community.

We also, in the health districts community we do examine issues that face all of them, and a couple of years ago we examined the process health districts put in place to assess the health needs of their residents.

And this past year we examined, for five health districts, whether health districts were using the health needs information they were collecting, gathering, to make resource allocation decisions. And thinking that those two issues were very significant to the success of health districts.

And so we looked . . . we examined more in-depth on those two issues. I use or I receive advice from an advisory group made up of people from the Department of Health, health districts, board members, HSURC (Health Services Utilization and Research Commission), and a member from the public accounting firm to provide us advice on how best to carry out our responsibilities within the health district. And so we're . . . well that's in general how we've carried out our work and our plans for this coming year.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I note on page 39 of your proposal that the Department of Health, which I guess includes the health districts, your budget shows . . . reflects what you're saying — it's considerably reduced. I think that speaks well to our health boards and the management systems that they're putting in place probably, or at least partly I would think, with your advice. And so I think we're moving in the right direction there.

And I want to ask you sort of a parallel question with respect to our . . . how the mix between the Provincial Auditor and the specific private auditors that the Crowns handle or the Crowns hire. As you know the mandate of the Crowns are shifting so that you steer it less and less by the legislature and the tools of the legislature. And they're being asked to act more and more like businesses and that simply has come round as a result of the changing trade patterns in the world and trade laws. Then they have to, in order for them to survive, they've got to get out and go knocking on other people's doors in addition to just serving the people of Saskatchewan, otherwise it will be a shrinking market here in a company that's shrinking. And it's hard to keep morale up and everything else. So the decision has been made to free them a bit -- probably not free them -- but to instruct them to get out into the public world more.

I expect that this will mean at the same time that the types of audits that will be done on them would change. And, for example, any financial plans that would be . . . you might ask of them, as a provincially contained Crown in the old sense, would

hamper the Crown in this day and age where they're going out into the world to compete.

So the question is: have you given any consideration, or had an opportunity to give any consideration, to this sort of changing nature of the Crowns as they're becoming more and more like independent businesses and how this might affect the relationship of your audit with their private auditors?

Mr. Strelhoff: — Mr. Kowalsky, members, we do spend a lot of time thinking about the ability of legislators to scrutinize the activities of all Crown corporations and agencies. It's a very important task and responsibility you have as legislators. As they get into more complex businesses, our responsibilities and tasks become more complex.

In general, when a government provides more autonomy to one of its organizations, one of the normal expectations in providing an organization more autonomy is that they would strengthen their accountability back to government and the legislature. And so we would be seeing how that takes place.

I think this morning the Crown Corporations Committee -- I think they met this morning -- reviewed for the first time one of the significant transactions that — I think it was SaskTel — undertook in the last few months. So there is a signal that the legislature is working to ensure that it is able to oversee, scrutinize, understand, keep track of the activities of Crown corporations as they diversify their activities.

At the Crown Investment Corporation a year or two ago we completed an examination of how they managed their investments, and mainly — that the big projects and the big share investments — to make sure that they have in place strong, strong systems and practices to oversee the diverse nature of their responsibilities. So the diverse . . . as Crown corporations get into more diverse activities, it makes the role of our office more complex.

We do have a pretty good protocol system in place and working quite well when . . . in those circumstances where the government chooses to appoint a public accounting firm. And the protocol system seems to work well, making sure that management is at the table, the public accounting firm and our office, in planning and overseeing the key issues of the day, that seems to be working quite well. So that'll help us continue carrying out our responsibilities as Crown corporations, assuming they do get into more complex and diverse activities in Saskatchewan and elsewhere.

Mr. Kowalsky: — As their mandate changes, I believe that there has to be, there'll probably have to be some kind of a corresponding change in the way the audits are being approached. Because while we . . . In order for them to be able to compete and grow, we are saying that we've changed the mandate, and as you say, it makes it much more complex. But if we keep the same old measurements of performance on them, then those two could be in conflict — the mandate could be in conflict with the performance measurement.

And it's . . . So I think the interrelationship has to be examined, and I would expect that it would result in probably a narrower role on the part of the auditor and the Crowns, although it might

be a more specific role but not as wide a scope a role.

I have one more question. It has to do with . . . page 13 in the report, you . . . item .36, you mention that 36 of your employees are professional accountants and 18 are training to become professional accountants. I want to ask about the mix you have of professional accountants and, quote, “non-professional accountants” within the Provincial Auditor’s office and how does that compare with, you know, big firms that might also have 100 employees, in terms of professionals to non-professionals?

Mr. Strelloff: — Mr. Kowalsky, the . . . I’ll just go back a little bit to the performance measurement comment that you made.

We are working with the Crown Investment Corporation officials to encourage them to set out key performance measures and indicators for each of the Crown corporations that they oversee and to encourage those Crown corporations to incorporate those performance measurements in their business plans and annual performance reports. So we are trying to come to grips with that.

The staff mix, the 35 professional accountants and 18 training . . . We are, what’s called in the profession, a training office where we bring in . . . well, part of what we do is train people for public service and work elsewhere. And how we carry that out is to bring in students, co-op students from the University of Regina and then undergraduate students to article for their chartered accountancy, mainly the chartered accountancy. And we have about 15 to 20 at any one time articling students. We have them in general for about three years as they article, and we encourage them to take exams and then write the final exam for their professional accounting designation.

Just a week or two ago, eight of our students heard the results, found out the results of their professional accounting exams, and six of those eight passed their exams. And that compares to a national average of about 60 per cent and a provincial average this year of 62 or 63 per cent. So we were quite successful this year.

We bring students in. And we also expect the new graduates, after a year or two, to leave. And in this past year, people in our office took new jobs at the Department of Health, at CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan), at the Sask Wheat Pool, Crown Life, university, and that’s — for us — success. Part of our success is being able to do that.

And we’ve maintained the proportion that we have for, at least as certainly as long as I’ve been the Provincial Auditor, seven years, and it’s about that type of ratio.

Now you asked me how does our ratio of students to professional accountants compare to other organizations that train like we do: public accounting firms and other legislative audit offices across Canada. I articulated at a public accounting firm. The name of the firm right now is KPMG; it was Peat, Marwick, Mitchell in Saskatoon, and it was back in the ’70s and the ratio was about the same.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Just before Fred goes ahead, I just want to make a comment that it’s nice to see that you’re proud of your

employees.

Mr. Strelloff: — Well that’s very important to us because . . . well, it’s obvious — the nature of our work is everything.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Well that’s . . . (inaudible) . . . because I picked that up as you were discussing it.

Mr. Wendel: — Yes, Mr. Kowalsky, I also worked for the private sector many years ago with Ernst & Young. But we audit directly . . . let’s say we audit an organization directly like, say, the Department of Agriculture. We would have the same kind of a staff mix as a CA (chartered accountants) firm. We’d have some junior staff doing the work. We would have a partner essentially in charge of it.

Where there’s an appointed auditor involved, we essentially use their junior staff, and we still have that partner involvement. So when you try and compare the mix, it’s difficult unless you pull all that out. I don’t know if that answers your question but that, that’s . . .

Mr. Strelloff: — So Fred, what you’re saying in terms of carrying out audits, we would have more professional accountants and less students than a firm also just carrying out audit work. Mind you, the firm’s practice also includes tax work, management consulting, human resource consulting, and a whole wide variety of businesses so it would be slightly, well it’s a different kind of nature.

Mr. Kowalsky: — We would expect to have a more productive body then because they basically on average is better trained than the average might be in the average firm.

Mr. Wendel: — It would be a different mix, Mr. Kowalsky.

Mr. Strelloff: — We think both. We think the firms train their people well as well.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Okay. I pass on. I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Chair: — Mr. Whitmore.

Mr. Whitmore: — It’s a question regarding table 2 on page 30 which regards the five-year summary of spending trends and the appropriation and other sources deemed to be other revenue

And an example is in the case of other sources of .034 in ’97 and .0344 in ’98 and then I go to page 37, the five-year financial summary and then look at those numbers in terms of other sources of revenue and those are for, let’s say ’97, .185 and for ’98, .186.

Are they not both the same sources of revenue? Or what is the difference here between that table and the other one. I couldn’t find the reasoning.

Mr. Strelloff: — Fred heard your question more carefully or understood your question more than I did. Fred can you explain.

Mr. Wendel: — We explained earlier on that sources on this schedule on page 30, just before that, just before page 30, we

say sources represent interest income, accounting or auditing fees being charged for ancillary work — say we are out auditing the Department of Agriculture again, just for . . . (inaudible) . . . We may find that they don't have their accounting records up to date; maybe somebody's been ill and they can't get it done. And we say well, we'll help you out and we'll charge you for that. So it represents those revenues and it also represents other sources. And this schedule represents our use of net financial assets.

Mr. Whitmore: — Is this on 30?

Mr. Wendel: — On 30. Correct. We'll go over to page 37 is where you were dealing with, right? So if you were to look at the '97 or '98 forecast there where we show other revenues of 186,000. Okay? And we say we are going to spend 344,000 more back on page 30. The extra spending would be coming out of our net financial assets that we had discussed earlier. Like we would be using them up.

Mr. Whitmore: — Other sources are not revenue then, it's expenditure . . .

Mr. Wendel: — No, a culmination of using up some of the money we had left over from last year.

Mr. Whitmore: — Okay.

Mr. Wendel: — And some of the revenue of this year. So that's what we're doing there, are we're using that money there, as Wayne had explained earlier, to improve the timeliness of our work. Like when we went to Treasury Board, they wanted to move ahead the dates for the *Public Accounts* so we used some of the money for that.

And as we explained in our '97 annual report, we said we had delayed the purchase of some computer equipment. We were going to buy it the next year. And that's what we're doing here.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just have a few questions and I guess I'm looking at your summary here and your request for appropriation on page 37. Last year I guess we were looking at, as I recall, somewhere in the neighbourhood of . . . was it 4 . . . I'm just trying to find myself here if you'll just give me a second.

Mr. Strelloff: — Top of page 37? On the forecast where it says . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, 4.220?

Mr. Strelloff: — Right.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — That's this year I see we're looking at 4 . . .

Mr. Strelloff: — 314.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Three, one, four, and that'd be just under \$200,000 I guess over last year. As I recall last year's discussions, and I think Mr. Kowalsky alluded to that earlier, your business plan indicated that you were going to be looking for a 2 per cent decrease in appropriation this year from last

year. But instead we're looking at — what would that be? — a couple of . . . about 2 per cent roughly over last year as opposed . . . So we've got a differential there of about 4 per cent.

And I'm just wondering in terms of your business plan what has changed specifically from when you put your business plan together between last year and this year? And the reason I'm asking that . . . I've just looked at an overall, just an overview of government departments and all arms of government. Since about 1992 there's been an average decrease in expenditures in other arms of government in the neighbourhood of 5 per cent, just roughly. When I look at the auditor's budget, it would appear to me that this would be an increase from '92 in your budget of just under 30 per cent.

So I'm wondering if you can explain to the board or help us understand. Last year a decrease of 2 per cent was forecasted. This year an increase of 2 per cent is requested, which is a variation of, like I said before, about 4 per cent.

Mr. Strelloff: — Mr. Lautermilch, what changed from last year when we said that we were going to come in with a 2 per cent decrease in this year? When we . . . the first part of that was that our 2 per cent decrease anticipated the same number of government organizations. So during this past year, there was an increase in the number of government organizations which covers the difference between the 4.220 and the 4.314. So that's why we came in with the increase related to 4.220 because the 2 per cent decrease last year anticipated the same number of organizations. So that's one side of the 2 per cent.

The other side of the 2 per cent relates to things like the 1 per cent salary COLA (cost of living allowance) that the government provided its employees which wasn't anticipated in our planning, and we did provide that. The extended benefit plan that was provided last January which we decided to offer a similar program. One was 1 per cent, and the other, I think, the cost of the extended benefit plan was just less than half per cent of our total costs . . . and just all the other higher than normal inflationary costs related to CPP and power and telecommunications and travel.

And we, at the end of the day, decided that let's propose an increase due to the number . . . the additional organizations that have been created and then propose that we would absorb all the inflationary type increases that are associated with COLAs and extended health care benefits and then come in with less or asking for more than we anticipated last year. And that's the truth.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — You know, I guess there's pressures in all departments. And having gone through the budgetary process a number of times now, I know that when departments come before Estimates and are looking for and asking for increases, all have legitimate concerns, whether it's capital expenditure that's required. Sometimes there're expenditures that are not anticipated within all arms and all departments. And I know it's difficult because when you're sort of on the downward slide in terms of expenditures as opposed to increasing expenditures on an annual basis, it really does, and it has put pressure on departments and people within those departments managing their budgets and at the same time wanting to deliver their mandate in the best way that they can.

Can I ask if you look about . . . I guess 25 per cent roughly of your budget is discretionary of nature: professional staff, training, office administration, committees, group planning activities, those kinds of things. Did you look at that as a way to be able to achieve what you had initially set out, which was a 2 per cent reduction?

Mr. Strelloff: — We provide a report on how we utilize our staff on page 46 of our business plan. I think what your question relates to . . . this schedule where we try to ride herd on the percentage of time our staff is carrying out audits versus the support services, office admin, and training. And you can see that we have changed that over the years. You can see that in the working hour task, that middle section where the total hours that are available to carrying out the work. We're trying to make sure that a higher percentage of that is focused on carrying out that direct audit work and trying to ride herd on the administration costs.

To make sure that we have a good, rigorous system to again ride herd on, we actually get this audited. We actually ask the public accounting firm that does our audit to take a close look at this to make sure that we know that we're carefully monitoring or managing the percentage of our time which is devoted to carrying out that audit work and trying to seek ways of minimizing the support services and office administration.

On the other hand, our office administration group, Sandy, Heather, our internal IT people face ongoing pressure as they're asked to do more and more tasks. But we are trying to ride herd on making the time that is available to our people as productive as possible. And that . . . this schedule just shows some indicators of how we're making sure that that's reported, managed, and monitored.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, I'm very pleased to see that. And it's always been, I think, a struggle in terms of trying to increase the productive hours in an eight-hour day and sometimes it's more than an eight-hour day, a ten- or twelve-hour day in lots of cases. And I appreciate seeing that the percentage of hours actually doing work has increased. And I want to applaud your staff for their dedication, because I think it sure does show that they are dedicated to their jobs and the work that they do.

Mr. Strelloff: — We also, by the way, cost out all our audits — hours, time, people — have plans in place that says here's how many hours and costs that this examination and project is supposed to take; have monthly reports on: okay, how much is it taking? Why is it less or more? And what do you need to . . . what kind of assistance do you need to get the job done?

So we . . . I mean we're very much a project management office and looking carefully at how people use their time.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Can I ask, did you look at training, the cost of operating your office, committee activities, new planning activities, did you look at that as a way where you might be able to cut the costs? And were you able to find any cost effective measures that you have put into this plan?

Mr. Strelloff: — Just in a general way, we oversee the performance of our people in our office, and part of that

overseeing is looking at the chargeable time they have to actual audits. And since we put pressure on that part of their responsibilities, there's a natural internal challenge to the proliferation of internal committees because they know that that's non-chargeable.

And so, I think just . . . There's a natural balance in, or force that counters the creation of internal committees and meetings because they know that the more meetings they go to the less time they can devote to getting their job done, and that's the key part of their performance.

But the training side, I mean there's so many different things happening that . . . where all the training is just so important to us.

Fred is pointing out that on page 60, at the request of this committee . . . or this board, we provided you some information on how our training, the number of days, compares to other legislative auditor offices and national public accounting firms so that you get an idea of whether we're, on the training side, way out or fairly comparable or consistent with firms and our office. And we seem to be okay there. And we do again monitor what's going on in public accounting firms, and also in our colleagues across Canada. And we did provide this information. And again, the more . . . we're aware of the overhead component of our work.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — So I'm still not sure that I have an answer. I guess maybe in terms of discretionary expenditures let me refer to it in your terms, in terms of the cost of overhead. Did you look at efficiencies that might be gained? You know we've discussed employee efficiency in terms of the hours actually spent doing the work. And I can see that by the audit that seems to be, you know, a very positive thing. Are there other areas of overhead that were reviewed where you found the ability to introduce some reduction in expenditures?

Mr. Strelloff: — This past fall when we tabled, or issued or tabled our fall report, volume 2, that report incorporated a significant change. Normally in the fall we report on the results of our audits of December 31 year ends, and this past fall we changed our work patterns and reporting patterns so that that report includes the December 31 year end results as well as a significant portion of our March 31 year end work. That would normally be reported in the spring.

Now that was a significant change. We put a fair amount of, well, pressure to make that transition, to try to get the results of our work completed in a more timely way because people were, legislators and government officials were, telling us that for your work to be more relevant you should be reporting in a more timely way.

Now that should help us in the future carry out our work more efficiently, I guess, because we spend a lot of effort doing some catch-up work. And I think over the next few years, I'm sure hoping, that that will bear a lot of fruit in terms of getting audits done in a more timely and less costly way.

In the past we've noted that when we report on the March 31 year end audit work in March, April, May, it's very difficult to get back, get our minds back into the issues that we had

examined maybe four, five, six months ago and trying to finalize the contents of the report. So I think by changing the time frames of our reports, which we've been doing over the last few years — but this one is another significant change — should bear fruit in the future.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — In what way? You mean more efficiency of operation or . . .

Mr. Strelloff: — It certainly will bear fruit in the sense of being able to provide advice to government organizations and to legislators on the results of our work in a more real time basis, as members of the Public Accounts Committee have remarked to me in the past that it's very difficult to focus on reports that deal with activities a year ago, and it's very difficult to get management engaged in a discussion at meetings of the Public Accounts Committee on issues that pertain to events that took place a year ago.

So I'm thinking that changing and improving our time frames is going to improve the attention to issues that we raise by government organizations, and I think that's going to improve the operations of those organizations. And it's also, I think, going to help members of the Public Accounts Committee and others that are interested in our reports engage in the issues that we bring to the table because they're more real time, and therefore there is more ability to effect change and improve the systems and practices of all government organizations.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I appreciate that. I would like to take you back to what I think was my question though.

When you put your business plan together last year, and as you've put your business plan together this year, last year anticipating a 2 per cent decrease, this year requesting a 2 per cent increase in appropriation, of the 25 per cent of your budget that could be referred to as overhead — administration, discretionary components — did you look to see if you could achieve the 2 per cent that you had indicated to this board last year, you could achieve this year?

Mr. Strelloff: — Mr. Lautermilch, we do look at all of our expenses. Almost all our expense is driven by people. It's the cost of their salaries, their employee benefits, their travel when they carry out work, their training, the . . . So it's very much, to reduce our costs, we reduce our people, and then reduce the number of hours that we have available to carry out our work.

So our key, our key focus, in terms of improving the cost-effectiveness of our office, is to try to ride herd on the hours, the costs of our audits. Because that will . . . that drives the number of people we need and then the associated costs of having those people, like the employee benefits and space and the training and other kinds of supplies and services. But we're accountants so we look at the costs constantly. And that's the nature of . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I don't know if we're coming together here on this. I guess I understand the efficiency and the human resource requirements and the fact that yours is very much a hands-on kind of business. That's what accounting is. You can't turn a machine on and have an audit done. I know that it takes person power. It takes direct application of people

through a task. And I recognize that and I understand that you're trying to achieve efficiencies.

But I'm asking, outside of human resources efficiencies, did you look and were you able to find, to assist you in achieving the 2 per cent reduction, were you able to find efficiencies within your budget and within your request for the appropriation to achieve the 2 per cent reduction that was suggested last year, would be requested this year?

Mr. Strelloff: — Mr. Lautermilch, and members, I guess to achieve the 2 per cent decrease we would employ fewer people. Our rental costs is a long-term lease agreement. Our employee benefits relates to the number of people that we have. The administration costs relates to travel for our audits, for the IT equipment and supplies that make our people more efficient, the supplies, and printing reports.

So I mean the way we handle increases or decreases in our funding is . . . starts with the people that we employ because that drives everything. Well I mean, I guess in general, that's how we manage the efficiency of our office, and the administration costs, and the employee benefits costs; and the rent, and space, and equipment, and training all relate to the people that we have.

I realize you're thinking — I think you're thinking — that to increase the efficiency of our . . . reduce our . . . increase efficiency we should focus on reducing our administration, employee benefits, rental space, advisory services, and training and development. But that's where we focus on, is on the people. And the fewer people we have then we have less administration, employee benefits, training and development costs. It's driven that way. We take a hard look at the administration costs and try to manage them carefully.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — You know, as I look at the auditor's budget and how it has been developing since '91-92 in through '98, the auditor's budget — and this board I think consciously is aware of the work that you do and the importance of the work that the Provincial Auditor does on behalf of the taxpayer to ensure appropriate expenditures in all arms of government — and I think to reflect that frankly this budget and the board has been part of post Treasury Board analysis of your budget, the scrutiny of your budget. Between what Treasury Board has done since '91-92 and this fiscal year, it is averaging an increase of 4 per cent a year, which is far over and above any other arm of government that I can think of. As a matter of fact, as I've indicated, other arms of government have been decreasing and have decreased in that time period, expenditures, real expenditures, by 5 per cent.

So I think it's fair to assume that we recognize the role that your office plays and the importance of your role. We also recognize that under your Act you are responsible for doing audits and you have responsibilities under your Act for examining, you know, all the accounts related to public funds and accounts that come as a result of the public funds, that you have that responsibility.

But when I look at the increase over that time period, and last year's indication that we were going to be seeing in fact a small decrease this year, even though it's only 2 per cent, and

recognizing the pressures that are on all other forums and all other arms of government as well — they deal with COLA and they deal with unforeseen circumstances — and your department has, year over year, maintained in your account, the surpluses from revenue raised, which is not an option that any arm of government has. That's all returned to the General Revenue Fund and then reallocated through the budget process, as I understand it. I can't think of another arm of government where funds are retained from one year to another. Certainly within the line departments — and I may be wrong on that; you might correct me — but I just can't think of one right now.

But I guess what I'm saying is, I know that we were, and board members were, anticipating the 2 per cent. And I'm wondering if it would be appropriate — and I think still asking you to deliver what is required of you under your Act, the audit of accounts related to public money and the ones that you're required to examine through legislation — if we were to ask you to have another look at your financial plan and return with a 2 per cent decrease that the board was told . . . and I think it's recorded in *Hansard*, but I don't think I need to read that in. But if you would be willing to have a look at that to see if you couldn't revise your plan and come in with in fact the 2 per cent decrease.

Mr. Strelloff: — Mr. Lautermilch, and members, Mr. Wendel was just reminding me that when we came in last year with our business and financial plan and advised you that we were planning to come in next year with a decrease of 2 per cent, we also advised you that that 2 per cent decrease anticipated that the number of government organizations would remain constant. And as you know, as we said in this plan that the number of government organizations created compared to the number of organizations that are wound up has not remained constant and has increased.

We also . . . I mean we did when we proposed or advised you what we were anticipating for this coming year, last year, we did set out some assumptions, that here's our assumptions. So we're also coming back this year and saying that, well some of those assumptions didn't hold. But of course, at the end of the day, it's up to your board or the members of this board, to decide what to recommend to the Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay, well I, you know, I think there have been some changes on the other side too. I know one of the discussions — the discussions that we've had — is the impact on the district health boards, their formation and the extra work that you are having to do that. You've indicated earlier this evening that you'll be spending less effort on those boards and hopefully you can find some cost efficiencies.

So if I have the support of my colleagues on the board, I'm going to recommend that you would revise your plan to reflect a 2 per cent decrease, and that further, the reduction should come from what I referred to earlier, is the discretionary components of your budget and that it shouldn't be offset by increased fees to government agencies. So I would make that recommendation and I'll put that in the form of a motion, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: — Okay. We'll attempt to draft that in motion form. Mr. Lautermilch, if I can ask for some clarification. I'm understanding that the motion you wish to propose would

achieve that the Provincial Auditor would be requested to revise the spending plan for 1998-99 to reflect a 2 per cent decrease from 1997-98, and further that the reduction in budgetary . . . or that the reduction be focused on discretionary . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — That the reduction should not be offset by increased fees.

The Chair: — Should not be offset by increased fees. And then you would add that this be reported too.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And I think in further, we should probably add that the revision should not result in a reduction of audits that are required by law. I think that would probably capture it. Or by the Provincial Auditor's Act, whichever way you want to word it.

The Chair: — Was required by the Provincial Auditor's Act.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, I think that would be appropriate.

The Chair: — And then I assume then finally that this proposal then be submitted to a future board meeting. You're not intending to make a decision, but to require the auditor to consider this and return to . . . for future . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I don't think he needs to bring it back to the board. As far as . . . as long as that criteria is met, I could, you know, I could support passage of the budget. I don't know what's appropriate; maybe it is inappropriate not to bring it back. Maybe it has to come back here. I don't know.

The Chair: — Well there . . . it must conclude at some point in time. The board must make a decision, must come to a conclusion.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well why don't we do that then. Let's have it brought back to the board, revised in that fashion and . . .

The Chair: — For the board to consider.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — For the board to consider.

The Chair: — At another meeting and then . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes.

The Chair: — With a decision that would follow.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Sure.

The Chair: — Follow that returning to the board.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Sure. Yes, fair enough.

The Chair: — Let me try this again then if I may, to determine whether this is the wording that you're wishing:

That the Provincial Auditor be requested to revise his financial plan — a business and financial plan — for 1998-99 to reflect a 2 per cent decrease from 1997-98.

And further, that the reduction in spending not be offset by increased fees. And further, that this revision should not result in a reduction of audits required by The Provincial Auditor's Act. And further, that this presentation be made for consideration at a future board meeting.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — That'll work.

The Chair: — Is there a seconder for that motion? Kowalsky.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker.

The Chair: — Yes.

Mr. Boyd: — While trying to follow . . .

The Chair: — For the move of the motion I need further discussion on . . . Any discussion on your motion, Mr. Lautermilch? Mr. Boyd.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you. In trying to follow Mr. Lautermilch's rather convoluted logic, I guess I'm having some difficulty. Looking at this presentation that the Provincial Auditor has made here, I find it incredibly refreshing, to say the least — a business and financial plan. What a novel idea in government.

What we see here is a funding request, an assessment of their effectiveness, who do they serve, their role, their legal status, their vision, their mission, how they carry out that mission, their reports on that mission, expected outcome of their work and their reports, their abilities and their knowledge with respect of all of this, their organization, how they put this plan into action, their goals and objectives, factoring out that working plan, our systems and practices to achieve our goals and object to why these systems are important; and a whole host of other things, including how they measure their performance, key outputs and outcomes, measuring their performance, their financial history, and impact of alternative funding levels.

Since Mr. Kowalsky entered into the discussion surrounding Crown corporations and has helped us with our understanding of why Crowns would want to invest in places other than Saskatchewan, like Chile or New Zealand or Guyana or some other third-world country, the whole thoughts, my whole thoughts surrounding Crown corporations, come to mind here.

And wouldn't it be refreshing for taxpayers in this province to have some sort of business and financial plan such as this one — a very comprehensive and detailed piece of work — presented to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan from the Crown corporations in a similar fashion? And I think the taxpayers of this province would rest far easier at night knowing that that kind of thing was being done by the Crown corporations, than what we see currently happening in Saskatchewan.

The government's reluctance to provide \$94,000 of increased budget to the provincial watchdog for the taxpayers of this province, I think should be considered a direct slap in the face of all taxpayers here in Saskatchewan. You guys will blow \$94,000 on your next trip to Guyana, easily go through that kind of money, I would suggest.

And I think the taxpayers of Saskatchewan should be offended

at the thought that you guys will be coming to . . . asking the Provincial Auditor to come back and reassess — which is a very, very good business plan — \$94,000. And when you take out, when you take out, when you take out the factors such as Crown corporation costs that your government has hoisted upon this Provincial Auditor, such as telephone, power, natural gas, insurance, and a whole host of other things, you're probably not even talking about \$90,000 but we're probably down into the 25,000 at most, I would suggest, if not less than that.

The Chair: — Mr. Boyd, if I could just interrupt you just a moment and ask that you direct your comments to the Chair.

Mr. Boyd: — Sure, I'll be happy to do that, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I think the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, just as I am, are astounded at this government's reluctance to provide an increased budget to the Provincial Auditor to provide some assurance to the taxpayers of this province that their tax dollars are being spent in a proper fashion.

Mr. Lautermilch's comments, that he wonders what would happen if we came back to a . . . if we tried to scale back this very responsible budget, I think are outlined on page no. 31:

If we do not (the Provincial Auditor says, Mr. Chair, if we do not) obtain sufficient revenue from the Board of Internal Economy or the government, we will have to reduce our staff. We will not, then, be able to carry out our work plan.

I don't think the taxpayers of this province would want that. I think that the people in this province, the taxpayers of this province, feel that the Provincial Auditor is probably one of the best places to spend money, keeping an eye on government expenditures.

Following that, the Provincial Auditor goes on:

If we are unable to obtain sufficient revenue we will change our work plan and not audit government organizations in the following sequence . . .

And, Mr. Chair, I would ask which one of these government members would prefer to not audit, or not have audited, revolving or other special purpose funds, Agriculture, marketing boards and commissions, or certain CIC-related Crown corporations.

I can't think of too many taxpayers out there that wouldn't want to see as much scrutiny given to all of those entities as absolutely as possible.

The Provincial Auditor goes on to explain:

When we do not examine government organizations, the Assembly does not receive our assurances on the government's financial report.

Again, as someone that's been elected in a constituency other than a government constituency, I think it is incumbent upon the government and all Crown corporations to provide as much information as possible on whether or not these organizations are working in our best efforts, Mr. Chair.

And again following that:

If necessary (the Provincial Auditor says) we will report to the Legislative Assembly which government organizations we were unable to report. When this is necessary, we are concerned with the impact this message has on public confidence in our system of government.

I think, Mr. Chair, that our system of government is in a situation now where many, many people would feel that it is very, very important that we do not do anything to further erode public confidence in the system. So I think that the Provincial Auditor's work plan here is a very, very comprehensive, very detailed, very responsible, and I think, on behalf of taxpayers, a very, very good effort put forward by an organization that has an extremely difficult job to do.

I would want to commend the Provincial Auditor for their work. I think that this is responsible and I hope that the government members would, Mr. Chair, reconsider a motion such as what they've put forward.

And I'm sure we've opened up a rather large can of worms here by these statements, and I'm sure that we'll get into all kinds of things like past adventures by past governments, and who cares? If you want to get into that, that's fine. I don't care whether you want to get into that kind of information or not.

I have the complete confidence that the people of Saskatchewan will know full well who those members of government were and who those members were not. But it's important I think here, that when we are looking at the Provincial Auditor's budget, \$94,000 of which all . . . very little, if any, is discretionary as being termed here. I think this is a responsible business plan, and I would hope that the board would pass it in its entirety.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Boyd.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes. I hope everybody will take this, Mr. Chair, in the good spirit that it's intended.

I'm older and wiser this year because I sit on Treasury Board now, and I sit there while we discuss a whole range of needs in Saskatchewan. I don't think anybody would pretend that the tight times haven't created needs. When you talk to social workers who have trouble managing to work properly with the families that they're responsible for, when you have teachers who are coping with the inability to perhaps provide all the services they would like to provide . . . And it's in this spirit and in this context that this request is made.

I would love to have the 20 million interest on the debt we spend every day of every day of the year. And if you consider that too political, well I guess I apologize, but that's just a great big reality. That would be enough to pay for five provincial auditors every single day of the year — their whole, entire year's budget. We could build a school every day of the year for that money.

So if you can accept those comments in the spirit that they are intended, then I guess you can grandstand however you want. But that is the reality. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Whitmore: — Mr. Boyd raised, Mr. Chair, some very interesting comments in terms of commitment to the Provincial Auditor.

I want to remind Mr. Boyd that this government has been committed to the budget of the Provincial Auditor since 1992. We have increased that budget by 26 per cent, recognizing the importance of the Provincial Auditor's role in terms of a watchdog — not to explain and not to go into the past in terms of how the Provincial Auditor was treated by a past administration, pre 1991 and the difficulty that took place there.

We have simply asked for a request and options in terms of what one should do, in terms of any prudent decision in terms of finances: to look at other options in terms of finances, in terms of other ways of doing the job properly for less.

And I think that's being prudent for the taxpayers of Saskatchewan also — to ask for options as departments are asked to give options, as Crown corporations are asked to give options, as individuals and as one makes decisions in one's business, to look at different options by which you make expenditures. This is a common way of doing business and we need to look at it that way. And that's being fair and prudent to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

But don't question the commitment this government has had to provincial auditors. Our record speaks for itself in terms of the budget increases we have provided to this auditor and the support we continue to provide, and the accountability factors that have opened up, as the auditors mention, in terms of the performance of this government regarding the recording, the recording and the timely release of documents now in terms of Crown corporations.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Whitmore.

Mr. Boyd: — Well certainly I would agree with many of the comments of Mr. Whitmore, that it is a common practice of the Provincial Auditor to present this kind of information and it's helpful to taxpayers in Saskatchewan no doubt.

Let's not deny the fact, or try to deny the fact, that the health boards and a number of other government agencies and commissions and everything else have added very, very significantly to the workload of the Provincial Auditor, and that is directly the reasons why the budget has been increased — not by the government incidentally, but by this board, the Board of Internal Economy. Certainly the government makes up the majority members on that board, but nevertheless this is the board that authorizes, this is the board that authorizes in the end the budget of the Provincial Auditor, I understand. And . . .

The Chair: — Order, order. Carry on, Mr. Boyd.

Mr. Boyd: — And I think it's important that we recognize it.

Just to reiterate. I think it's a great business plan. I would hope that this committee would accept it and provide as much . . . the very necessary resources to the Provincial Auditor for him to carry out his work.

The Chair: — Thanks, Mr. Boyd.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I would like to join this debate and I'll try not to get on the pros and the cons of whether government's done all the things right in the past or whether the leader of the former Conservative Party and their party . . . what they had done.

As I listened to Mr. Kowalsky's opening comments in talking about Crown corporations, I couldn't agree less with him that the Provincial Auditor's going to have to spend less time looking at the Crowns. I think the people of Saskatchewan are starting to see now where we've got to have someone independent to look after the interests of the taxpayers of this province.

I use a small quote that I heard the Premier use a couple days ago at a press conference as he was talking about the first ministers' meetings and how . . . and the question was asked of him in his conference, press conference, as to what he thought about the rail lines in this country. And he thought for awhile, and then he got going and he got up on his high horse, as he quite often does, and talked about . . . and the phrase he used I guess was, let's pony up the books, boys. And he's referring to our national rail lines to open up the books and have someone, if not publicly, independently, to look at those books to ensure that we're not gouging the taxpayers of Canada, in particular grain producers in western Canada.

So on one hand we have the Premier talking about ponying up the books, let an independent body look at what's happening with those books, and yet we have a government here in Saskatchewan who's reluctant to have anyone look into the Crown corporations or what they're doing.

I see the auditor's plan and I believe as diligent by any board should be, to look at it and say well, maybe you could go back and you could chip away a little here and chip away a little there and maybe you can come up with a little bit of a saving. However, I think the Provincial Auditor is being quite prudent in his business plan, in that I think he will have to spend more time investigating the Crown corporations. I think he will not be spending less time with the health board, I think he will find that there will be more issues there that he'll have to be monitoring and auditing.

He's laid out the reasons why he feels that he needs an extra \$94,000, which if you say it fast doesn't sound like much. And in today's economy I guess it isn't a lot of money, but to taxpayers in this province it's a great deal of money.

But I think if you look at what we're getting for our money and the reasons that the auditor, Mr. Strelhoff, has laid out why he needs this extra money, I think most of us can understand, including the taxpayers of this province, that indeed it's not a ridiculous request. It's something that is needed, and certainly I would hope that possibly the government side would reconsider their motion and let the Provincial Auditor get on with his business.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Just very briefly, I think it's a reasoned approach to have the auditor look at what the motion requests. I can't think of an arm of government that gets, year after year, all of their requests. I can't name an arm of government since 1992 that's had a 26 per cent increase in their

appropriations from the government. And I think it's a reasoned approach to ask him to have a look at it.

Now members of the opposition may not feel that to be an appropriate move. I'm just thankful that they're not sitting around the Treasury Board, because I know what the requests add up to when it comes to the Treasury Board members, and I know how much over our revenue flow that is for this year. And it's not a small figure, and it wouldn't paint a pretty picture. And it would lead to deficits, perhaps in the magnitude we saw in the 1980s.

But that's not the way this government operates. We were sent here to put our fiscal house in order and we'll do that. We were sent here to increase accountability and we have been doing that and we'll continue to do that. But at the same time we're asking everyone to share, and I don't think the fact that we've put 26 per cent more in terms of an allocation to the Provincial Auditor in any way should be tainted as not allowing him to do his job, because that's just silliness.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess if you look at some of the investments that the Crown corporations are undertaking around the world these days and why are so many people asking why — and somebody raised earlier that the Crown Corporations Committee sat this morning, and they did, to talk about a New Zealand company where the government knows full well that for the next number of years that there will be nothing but losses, red ink, for that agency.

And it was asked to me the other day of an old farmer out in my constituency, says well, if they're wanting to lose money over the next four years in an investment like this, why wouldn't they save their money, take the \$30 million and invest it in mutual funds some place and we could guarantee them the 15 per cent return on the investment that they think they're going to get after the year 2001 in that particular investment.

So it's a matter of choice that the government has, and they have to decide where they're going to spend the money.

One of the problems I saw with Mr. Lautermilch's motion I think, was that he didn't only ask the Provincial Auditor to go back and re-think or re-look at this. I think the motion in my mind reads, you go back and find the savings, and that's the end of the story. And I think that was in his thinking when he didn't realize that maybe he had to bring it back to this body to look at it.

Now if he's asking to go back and see if he can come up with a few dollars, fine. But it seems to me he's tying his hands and saying, you go back and find it; we're not accepting this budget, and until you find it, it's not going to be there.

So I don't think it's an option, it's an either/or; it's, you know, you're not going to have the dollars that you request.

The Chair: — I don't see anyone else on the list. Are you ready for the question? The question then, and I'm going to read it again. Unfortunately, not having it in print to start with, it's been slightly revised I think, but without changing the intent of it from the way I last worded it before you began your debate on it. So I'd like to read it in its totality to you before I put the

question to you then.

It is moved and seconded:

That the Provincial Auditor be requested to revise his business and financial plan for 1998-99 to reflect a 2 per cent decrease from 1997-98; and further, that the reduction should not be offset by increased fees in charges to government agencies; and further, that this revision should not result in a reduction of audits required by The Provincial Auditor's Act; and further, that this revision be made for consideration at a future Board of Internal Economy meeting.

That's the question. Those in favour, please indicate. Down hands. Opposed? And the motion is carried.

I think that that will . . . any final comments, Mr. Strelieff, you'd like to make before we move to our next agenda item?

I think it's fair if the Provincial Auditor would like some clarification about the intent.

Mr. Strelieff: — Members, one of the aspects of the motion says that the reduction should not be offset by increased fees and charges to government agencies. My question is: earlier Mr. Wendel referred to situations where we are in the midst of audits and where a government organization, for some reason, can't . . . wants our assistance in getting their job done, helping them fix their accounting records or carrying out a special investigation, and we normally charge for that. Is that what this contemplates? I just need some advice or guidance on that.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think in a special circumstance, it would certainly be my opinion that that would not be an inappropriate change.

The Chair: — In interpreting the motion, that would be the view of the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — But in a special circumstance. That would be the rule of thumb.

Mr. Strelieff: — So a special circumstance being the government organization asking us, agreeing in a contract that we'd like you to do some accounting work to facilitate the audit or that there's some suspected fraud in the organization and that they want you to carry it out or . . .

A Member: — What a nasty word.

Mr. Strelieff: — I just want to make sure.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — That is clearly a special circumstance, and you know in that kind of circumstance I would have no difficulty with . . .

The Chair: — That would be the Chair's interpretation as well. Okay, thank you very much to the auditor and your staff. And we'll be seeing you at the board meeting that will be scheduled as soon as conveniently possible, both with yourselves and the members of the board. And we'll probably . . .

A Member: — Before Christmas?

The Chair: — Can I ask if the members of the board do have a preference? Can I just ask that we not consult with the media for a moment while the Chair is trying to wrap this up?

Is it the board's preference to come back to this item prior to Christmas or not? I guess that's really the basic question in terms of timeliness.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — The sooner the better. I would suggest we try and pass . . .

The Chair: — Can I suggest, when the House is meeting next week, and the members of the board will be here in the capital city, and it will be our objective to try to hold this follow-up meeting related to this motion next week, if at all possible? And I'll ask then that the auditor would advise the Chair as soon as possible as to when you think you would be ready return so that we could work at scheduling the meeting.

Mr. Strelieff: — Okay.

The Chair: — Okay. And we'll do that at the earliest convenience then, and I thank the auditor and your staff and we'll wish you Merry Christmas next week.

Mr. Strelieff: — Okay, thank you.

The Chair: — I've had a request for about a five-minute recess. Is that the wish of the members of the board before we move to our next item? I'll declare a five-minute recess then.

The meeting recessed for a period of time.

The Chair: — We will now move to decision item no. 5 on your agenda, and we have the Provincial Ombudsman, Barb Tomkins, who is here with us. And assisting her at the table right now is the deputy ombudsman — I had to make sure I get the title correct — Murray Knoll.

You will note on item no. 5, that item no. 5 will include two items: the offices of the Provincial Ombudsman and the Office of the Children's Advocate. We deal with them with a single motion although they are two separate offices with separate budgets. And you'll notice then as well that on the sideline is the Children's Advocate.

What I'm going to suggest that we do, to deal with this as expediently as possible, is to ask the Provincial Ombudsman to describe to you her budget proposal, allow for your questions, to the point of which you're ready to make your motion. But at that point we'll stop and then move to the Children's Advocate presentation, questions. And then when we conclude that, we'll have a motion that deals with both of the budgets. So the motion will have two parts to it. Is that acceptable? And that is what we did last year.

If that's acceptable then, I'll ask Ms. Tomkins then to proceed, and you will find your budget proposal in your agendas under item no. 5.

Ms. Tomkins: — Thank you. Good evening. I don't intend to

read through the submission. I'm going to assume — which is very dangerous with judges, but I'll assume that you are more reliable — but I'll assume that you've read it.

I've described in our budget submission certain pressures which my office is facing. These pressures have built over many years, probably as many as 12 or 14 years. They've reached the point where I think they must be addressed. I believe that we've looked at internal efficiencies as far as we can go. Our budget is small. Our staff is small, and our ability to absorb things is much more restricted than that of a larger department. And if you want me to explain why that is through questions, I'll certainly be prepared to answer it.

Basically, the situation that we're in, as is described in more detail here, is that over many years we've developed a backlog, and we've reached the point where, probably some years ago, but especially now, it is having serious and real impact on the work that we're doing.

We also see ourselves as having a mandate and a requirement and a real benefit to our office and to citizens of the province and to government if we were able to focus more of our attention on work other than investigations, especially in the public education field, especially relating to the principles of fairness and public education to government about that. So that programs and policies can be developed and administered in accordance with those kinds of standards and those criteria, such that it would in the end hopefully reduce the number of complaints that come to our office.

Right now our resources are dedicated almost entirely to the investigation of complaints. If we were to calculate in hours the time dedicated to other activities it would be very tiny, probably less than a per cent of our time.

Looking at traditional ways of dealing with this, one looks at increasing staff, and I've set out what would be, I think, a traditional suggestion for how to deal with this, that we would require an additional complaint analyst in each office, additional investigators in each office, an administrator or administrative personnel in the Regina office.

I think that's a traditional approach; I don't think it's a responsible approach. I don't think it's necessarily the best approach in terms of the effectiveness of the work that . . . or how effectively we might be able to work. I think a better approach is for us to look at what we do, what we've done for the last 25 years, and see if there's other ways to do it and do it better.

And having done that, I think that certainly those of you who are familiar with the office, I hope that you may have noticed that the way the office works has changed philosophically at least over the last number of years; that we're much more focused now — and would like to be more focused — on resolution, on working cooperatively, on education, and much less will be perceived as a watchdog in the negative and adversarial sense that that term is used. In fact it's a term that I prefer isn't used at all.

I've said publicly in a number of forums that I see our office as a partner of governments, trying to achieve the same goal,

which is to ensure that the citizens are treated fairly in the administration of government services. And I mean that very sincerely. And I think that if we work cooperatively with government, we will achieve much greater resolution of the individual complaints, and we will achieve more easily and more effectively much better solutions to prevent future complaints.

Taking that approach as opposed to the traditional approach, what I think might — and I say that quite sincerely — what I think might address our problems quite satisfactorily is the addition of two positions to my staff. I would propose to put one in Regina, one in Saskatoon. These are the positions I've described in my submission as resolution facilitators.

The premiss behind those facilitators is that we could deal with positions such as is described. We could deal with complaints which are brought to us on an almost immediate basis. I'm thinking in terms of a matter of a couple of weeks at the outside. We could deal with complaints, most complaints, that quickly to ensure that the matter is canvassed and a resolution is achieved or is sought in a very . . . sought early after the complainant comes to our office and hopefully resolved very quickly after the complainant comes to our office; so that the service to individuals coming to the office can be given more effectively and more quickly.

That would leave us with a basket of issues that are no longer attached to specific people but which we could then look at in a more systemic way, we would be able to look at in a more timely way, in the reverse of the way that term is normally used, and I mean more timely in the sense that we could look at when, logically, more in a sense of prioritizing, when logically those issues needed to be looked at. They would lose some of their urgency when there isn't an individual attached to the other end of the issue.

I think that with that those two positions, we would eliminate a number of the formal investigations we normally undertake. We would eliminate a great deal of the work that's now in the complaints analysts' offices, and I think that even without being intimately familiar with my office, just from considering perhaps your constituency workers as roughly comparable, and I know it's not direct, when you look at the number of complaints that come through those two offices — 5,000 going through two women — and they're talking to each of those people at least I would guess, an average of three, four, five times, plus to government people plus collecting information off the fax machine and through the mail, I think it's absolutely astounding that they do what they do and I think it's unreasonable that I expect them to do anything more.

So if I were able to have the two new positions, I think that would relieve some of their workload, so that the need to request additional complaints analyst staff would be eliminated for the foreseeable future at least.

In addition to this, and I see it as part and parcel of making this proposal work, I'm requesting on a one-time basis, subject to review next year, and if you were prepared to agree to fund this, I would be prepared to provide you statistics next year as to what we accomplished as a result. I think the success of the proposed new resolution facilitator process is dependent on our

clearing up the backlog that we now have. And I think that if we were able to have two full-time investigators for one year, we could make substantial progress on that, if not entirely eliminate it in a year. And that's why I've asked that it be reviewable after a year. I'm not able to commit with confidence to say at the end of the year we'll have it cleared up.

But I think we'll have made great inroads and we might have it cleared up. But I can't say without seeing what happens whether we would be there or not. But even making a substantial inroads would make a great difference.

With those two, the administrative officer that I referred to in the other part of the proposal, I suspect at some stage we would still ask for but I don't see that as necessarily being . . . certainly not this year, and perhaps not next. The difficulty with the administrative stuff is I think that the way it's now being done is a very poor use of the resources we have. We have highly skilled people, particularly Mr. Knoll beside me who does a wonderful job of our budgets and our health plan and our employee services and human resource issues.

But I think that his talents are much greater than that, and I think that if his talents could be dedicated to investigations and resolutions, it would be better utilized.

I realize that in making this request, I'm asking for a substantial increase to our budget. In looking at those increases broken down, I would note that a chunk of those increases relates to salary increases, none of which were within control or discretion of the office, the total of which exceeds our entire discretionary budget.

The projected cost for the two resolution facilitators, I think, is quite reasonable. The only thing I think there that's got some flexibility to it is travel, but the amount requested is not substantial.

On the temporary investigators, we didn't request travel. Frankly, I think we might need it because we might have to base them both in Regina simply for space reasons and that would require then some travel north. That I think we can absorb within the existing travel budget and that that we're requesting for the two permanent positions.

The other thing we're requesting, and the amount is not significant I hope to you, but it's significant to us is a commitment of funds of reasonable amount for communications. We have had now for six years a legislative mandate to do public education. Until last year we had no funding allocated for that purpose beyond our annual report, which is a very expensive public education tool and it's not what it's intended for.

We were fortunate last year that this board saw fit to approve funding for us to hire a half-time communications consultant, our communications co-ordinator who is with us tonight in fact. At the time that we requested funding for that half-time position, we requested \$4,000 for printing and materials and pamphlets, 2,500 for travel. This is what happens when you worked in an office which for 25 years hasn't had any funding allocated for public education. We learned very early on that what we had requested is simply inadequate. We can't produce

one pamphlet for reasonable distribution for the sum of money that's available. And it frankly seems rather bizarre to be paying somebody half-time salary to administer \$4,000 worth of projects. This is our mistake in the sense that probably last year we should have submitted for a higher amount. We simply didn't understand the cost.

I think you all probably understand them better than I do having administered your own communications allowances over many years and knowing the costs of newsletters and publications, which are exactly the kind of things that we would like to produce for the office.

And on that basis, we're requesting that the budget for communications be increased by \$15,000 which still, I believe, is minimal when you consider that we're trying to reach the population throughout the province through various different vehicles but we have basically a mandate or will be making an effort to reach virtually every household in the province through one means or another. And we don't anticipate we're going to do that in a year, but we would like in the long term to be able to identify target groups. But certainly, the general public will be a goal or a target group within that for certain purposes.

We have good news which is that we requested and received last year funding of \$10,000 to enable us to host the Canadian Ombudsman conference. That was a one-time funding item. I could advise you as well that we charged the registrants a fee which was paid directly to the Minister of Finance, and I think you actually made a small profit on that. And we won't be needing that \$10,000 this year.

In the end we're asking for a substantial increase in our budget. I hope it's not viewed by you as irresponsible. It's our view after looking at our services and what we're able to do now and what we think we ought to do; that what we've taken is a rather creative and forward-looking approach to dealing with the problems; and that what we've actually presented you is . . . although we're requesting an increase, the increase we're requesting is two-thirds of one-time funding. And the total of the two is much less than we would have requested had we taken a much more traditional approach to resolving the problems we face.

And I'd be pleased to answer your questions.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you, Ms. Tomkins.

Let me just correct what I had described to you as procedure. The secretary correctly points out to me from the minutes of the last year's meeting that although we're dealing with these as single agenda item, we'll deal with them as separate motions. So when we've considered your deliberations, we'll have a motion and then proceed to the Children's Advocate.

The floor is open for questions to be addressed to the Ombudsman, and I'll start with Ms. Crofford.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — First of all, I'd just like to thank you. I think probably we should put something in the budget to buy those women capes as well because they're obviously superwomen.

Ms. Tomkins: — They're amazing.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — But the one thing I am conscious of is, as you know, the Human Rights Commission has also been struggling over time with a backlog and I worry a little bit about seeming to be unfair as far as I think they're . . . I'm trying to remember what I read now, whether it's nine months. And I'm wondering, you're saying this would take . . . you hope it would take your backlog to about a two-week turnover.

Ms. Tomkins: — Oh, I'm sorry, no it wouldn't go to that. I think that would frankly be unrealistic. I don't think we would ever be at that stage. There will still be many, many, many hundreds of cases that require full investigations each year. And those investigations simply can't be done in two weeks just because of the mechanics of life. You write a letter and someone has to check out their information, respond to you if someone is on holidays. It doesn't work . . .

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think there's is nine months to point of first contact.

Ms. Tomkins: — Yes, actually the last that I heard. And it's a matter actually that we've looked into, the Human Rights Commission, through the use . . . and frankly I stole some of this from the Human Rights Commission is because they had . . .

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, they changed some of their programs.

Ms. Tomkins: — No what I specifically was interested in is I knew they had used temporary investigators to help them catch up. I was frankly sceptical, thinking that by the time you got temporary people on staff and got them trained and so on, it would not be an efficient way to do that. And their experience was quite the reverse, that their temporary investigators were extraordinarily efficient and they have virtually eliminated their backlog through the use of temporary hirings in the space of about a year. And it was at least nine months, I think it was more than that, before they hired temporary people.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes. It is interesting — the volume. I mean there's all kinds of reasons for that, although there is an article in *The Globe and Mail* recently about human rights types of agencies all over have experienced a big increase in people approaching them. So there's probably more awareness, but also people being more educated about these things.

I think the resolution facilitators are a good idea. Any place I've seen that in operation it has a real good effect. And I guess I would hope that you find a way for your temporary positions to be temporary. But I don't really have any questions beyond that because I think it is worthwhile exploring what you can accomplish with the resolution facilitators and to take a year to see how that goes.

So I don't have any other questions.

The Chair: — Okay, I don't have anyone else on the list and the proposal from the Ombudsman is a budget figure of \$1.262 million. Yes, okay, Mr. McLane.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you. Just looking at the figures on page 5 and I notice that continually from the year 1991 we've seen an increase in complaints against government right up to the present time.

And I'm just wondering, for a government that enjoys using retroactive legislation and those types of procedures to get their business done and since we have a couple of cabinet ministers in our presence today, I would wonder if maybe they could comment if they're planning on changing their ways and the complaint list against government might lower itself and would certainly help out your budget.

And so, Mr. Chairman, I just wonder if maybe a reform in government might help us all out, and in particular in this case, in the case-load that we've seen an increase since the government came to power in 1991.

The Chair: — The Chair would say that although the Chair welcomes all constructive and positive recommendations that we might be wise to stay relatively close to the subject before us here, which is the Ombudsman's budget.

Ms. Tomkins: — I think I could also indicate that if that chart went back further those numbers have gone up every year since 1972.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Is how the complaints were dealt with — I mean how they were received — whether the complaints were . . . you get a complaint, you have to deal with it.

Ms. Tomkins: — Yes.

Mr. Kowalsky: — And the result of the complaint.

Ms. Tomkins: — Do you mean do we deal with them in the same way? Or do we obtain better results?

Mr. Kowalsky: — Actually, no. I was just being rhetorical.

Ms. Tomkins: — Oh, I'm sorry. Okay . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I didn't know the answer.

Mr. Kowalsky: — We were just having a little moment out here.

The Chair: — The Chair is of the view the hon. members are warming up for next week. And the Ombudsman as an officer of the Assembly should ought not to be drawn into the debate.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I will attempt not to do that.

It is a substantive increase in your budget, as you realize and as you've indicated as well. I like very much the approach you're taking.

We would, I think, want to see your backlog decreased. I know there will always be a process and it will require some ongoing cases and some open files, and I think Ms. Crofford has probably said what I would want to say to you: that hopefully next year — and I support your request — but I'm hopeful that next year the temporary investigators that we could have enough advancement in terms of your progress getting rid of

your backlog that we might be able to delete that as an expenditure.

I'm not asking you to commit to that because I know that's not a tangible thing that you're dealing with here right now.

Ms. Tomkins: — We're going to be very crowded so I think we'll be hoping to be done with them after a year as well.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay. And I just want to thank you for your work during the course of the year.

The Chair: — I have no one else on my list. It would be in order to have a motion if the . . .

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I move that we approve the budget of the Ombudsman.

The Chair: — Can I recommend some wording to you then to that regard.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Sure.

The Chair: — If that's your intent.

That the 1998-99 estimates of the Provincial Ombudsman be approved as submitted in the amount of \$1,262,000 and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Do you move?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, I agree with that. I so move.

The Chair: — Is there a seconder? Mr. Whitmore.

Is there further discussion then on the motion before the board? There being none, those in favour please indicate. Those opposed. And that motion is carried. Thank you. The secretary will prepare the motion for signing for our official records.

And we'll welcome to the table the children's ombudsman, as you will all know, in the person of Deborah Parker-Loewen. And in your item number 5, this is part 2, I want to just advise when I've reviewed the layout of the budget, it deals with a number of factors and the amount proposed by the children's ombudsman for 1998-99 — or sorry, Children's Advocate. Did I say ombudsman? Children's Advocate, I'm sorry — be the amount of \$782,785, is the amount. And I'll turn the floor over, then, to the Children's Advocate.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good evening, board members. I don't know . . . is this actually a microphone?

The Chair: — Yes, yes, it is. So if you just pull it towards you, that will help.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — It doesn't enhance it, though?

The Chair: — No, no.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Oh, okay. She might have . . . That

might be helpful.

The Chair: — You need to be close enough to be . . .

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Sorry. Well thank you for this opportunity to present my budget to you. The budget requests that you've received for 1998-99 was actually very difficult for me to prepare.

As you can see from the document, we have a number of competing priorities in our office and we've been challenged by preparing what we consider to be a responsible and practical request, while also working to ensure that we fulfil the requirements of our legislation.

As an officer committed to a set of principles and to the legislation that we operate under — and those are detailed somewhat for you on page 10 — as you can see, we're actively promoting an increased understanding of an awareness of the unique vulnerabilities and interests of children with our goal being to work towards improvements to government practice, policy, and legislation as these impact on children.

On page 11, I outlined briefly for you the pressures in our office. I have to apologize for a calculation error that's presented on page 11 and again on page 13. I think it's been difficult for us to accept the increase that we've had in requests for service. And the actual percentage increase is 81 per cent — not 45 as stated in the document that you received.

I actually do have difficulty accepting that we've responded to an 81 per cent increase in our service requests since last year at this same time, although we are all working extremely hard under quite, sometimes painful circumstances. We're stretched to respond in a timely manner to the citizen concerns that come into our office, and we've made great efforts to assist with resolving issues that citizens bring to our attention.

The actual formal investigations that we engage in is quite a small percentage of the files that we actually carry because we're committed to working at resolving issues at the front end. So at this point, that's our goal.

We do have a number of what we call open, systemic files in our office where we're working to seek increased understanding of practices and policies and then advocating for systemic change.

And in addition, I think we've increased our public education activities by promoting a greater awareness of children's rights. And I think you may have received our first publication in that regard.

A major pressure which is new to us this year has been our involvement in the review of child deaths. We're involved in this both from a system perspective as well as in doing independent investigations of specific deaths of children. And I'll speak of this more when I present the specific budget request.

We also remain very concerned about northern children and some of the issues facing children in northern Saskatchewan. We've begun, as we discussed last year at this time, we've

begun to become more active in communities in the North, north of La Ronge, north of Meadow Lake, and we're also working to be very respectful of the work that the community advocates in those areas are doing as well to improve the lives of children.

So what I'm requesting in terms of the 1998-99 budget for you to consider is the salaries, which are also as with the Provincial Ombudsman, the salary increases are in accordance with the legislated or annual salary adjustments.

The request for funds for a full-time child advocate assistant has been outlined for you in the document. I just wanted to note that many of the calls to our office — about half — are actually not within the legislated mandate of our office but they're calls from citizens, some of them children — actually about 22 per cent are from children — and the remainder from adults, several of those parents, who just don't know where to go for help. They're not sure what to do; they're seeking assistance and often they're very distressed, frustrated, upset about whatever is happening in their lives.

Some of those situations that are out of our legislated mandate are parents or students concerned about school issues, suspensions, discipline practices, teacher behaviour, ethics, or parents or even young people concerned about custody access, decisions which were made in court but which they're distressed about. So about half of our calls are linked to concerns of children which are actually not in the mandate of our legislation but the child advocate assistant that we currently have working for us on a temporary basis assists those callers to deal with their issues in . . . through providing them with information, providing them with strategies that they can use to help to resolve their issue as their own self-advocate.

What we do is try to find a way for those citizens even though it's not in our mandate to sort of pave the way for them to get some kind of resolution somewhere else. We have a sort of internal policy that the next call should be helpful to them so we'll sort that out and then give them somewhere to go for help if we can.

That assistant frees our advocates to travel and to work with children or community advocates in resolving the . . . within mandate concerns that do come to us as well. I think it's also interesting to note that many of the concerns that we do have, even though they're within our legislated mandate, are also resolved by the child advocate assistant providing information, strategies, connections, phone numbers, and just generally being helpful.

The second request that we're making is in terms of administration costs. The costs of accommodation were somewhat higher than were anticipated last year. The telephone and travel costs are increasing which reflects really the full complement of staff that we currently have as well as our increased commitment to travelling throughout the province and being as visible and available as we can. Children obviously can't travel to us in very many circumstances so we need to go to them.

The other area under administration are that our computer needs are growing. We have been very generously provided with

computer support through the Ombudsman's office. But I think as our office continues to grow and make demands, this is creating pressures on the Ombudsman's office, and so we're requesting annualized funds for our office to have some computer support.

Right now we do that on a contracted basis with a company in Saskatoon and the funds actually are allocated for that through the Ombudsman's office. So it's through their good graces that we currently now have computer support funding.

We've also requested \$20,000 to create an information-tracking system specific to the Children's Advocate office. Right now we're using a system that we adapted from the Ombudsman, but it really isn't meeting our needs. It has a number of elements to it that were never really intended for a children's based service.

As an example we can't track the age of the children that contact us and so we're unable to do that unless we do a hand count. We're at projecting close to 600 new cases this year alone. Doing a hand count makes it very difficult. So our request for a tracking system we hope is a one-time expense that we would be able to then get better information with regards to the people that are contacting us and the resolution and outcome.

We did explore with other advocates' offices the possibility of utilizing a tracking system that was already prepared. The difficulty is that Saskatchewan is still quite unique in terms of a Children's Advocate office. We're the only province in Canada that has an office that has jurisdiction with all government departments and agencies that serve children.

All of the other offices provide services to either only children in care under a child welfare authority of some kind, and in three other provinces, to young people in conflict with the law. But other than that, they don't have the broad mandate that we do, and so the tracking system is difficult to adapt as well and we think it would cost more than just creating a new one.

Our third area is communications under this section. We have begun to produce a newsletter. Our communications coordinator is quite proficient at doing this in-house and so we're quite pleased that we've been able to have a person doing that. However, we see that this kind of a communication would stretch our somewhat limited communications dollars and so we're making that request.

The funds to enhance that I've requested . . . I've given a lot of thought to my request in this area. It's a very difficult area and I know that the overall amount that I'm requesting is a significant portion of our current budget. I am also sure that you're aware of some of the pressures I've experienced in 1996 and I've attempted to be practical in my request.

So with regards to our involvement with the deaths of children, we have two priorities here: one is that in collaboration with the Provincial Coroner, with Justice, Social Services, Health, the first nations communities, FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations), some of the Indian child and family services agencies, the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), the Police Commission, the Metis nation, the Institute on the Prevention of Handicaps, we've formed a multi-sectoral

committee. And we're beginning to really come to grips with what happens when children die in our province and how is that reported and what do we really understand about those deaths. And there's many layers to this and it's quite complex.

We've identified terms of reference which we anticipate formally announcing in a public way in, hopefully, February of 1998. Our comprehensive review of similar multi-sectoral committees and other jurisdictions suggest that, actually, in Saskatchewan, we're taking a very proactive and responsible approach to looking at how deaths are dealt with here.

Our committee, as I just mentioned, is very inclusive. However, some of the non-government participants in the committee really don't have any funds for participating in this kind of an activity, and so we've requested some funding to assist with their travel and sustenance in order to help them participate.

And we also think there's a need for the committee members and for others who might be peripherally involved to have some training in this area. There are some jurisdictions that have more solidly established child death advisory committees of this nature than we do, and we think that it would be useful to have some increased information in that area. So we've requested some funds to do that kind of training.

The second area under the child deaths is the Children's Advocate involvement in the actual investigation of deaths. As you may be aware, in November 1996 the Department of Social Services changed its death of a child or youth policy and that policy then required that the department notify the Children's Advocate and the Provincial Coroner in the event of a death of a child receiving care — and there's a number of different regulations — but either in . . . currently receiving care under those certain circumstances or have had care within the past 12 months.

I anticipate that you might be interested in the numbers of children whose deaths would be reviewed by this social services policy. And I want to say that the way these children's deaths are being reviewed and the notification process that we're involved in has been evolving. And so the numbers are difficult to communicate, not because we don't have them but because as we gain increased knowledge of the need to have a bigger net and have a greater examination of a wider number of deaths, the numbers actually have increased.

So we're continuing to expand our work in this area and we're learning more about this process as we go along. But since January 1, 1997, there were 22 deaths which occurred where there was either current Social Services involvement or involvement in the year prior to the death. So in the first three quarters of the year, from January 1, 1997 to the end of September, those 22 deaths have occurred. And I could give you a breakdown if you're interested.

A small number of those children were actually in foster care or in a young offender facility and, from our analysis of those deaths, we anticipate our office being involved in an extensive investigation of three or four of them.

We're not requesting additional staff for this activity, and I sort of anticipate you saying why, why not. I guess we've decided

that at this time we would prefer to have flexible funds available to us because we think that would be a more practical way to ensure that each investigation and each of these deaths receives the specialized attention that we think it needs.

So that if we require a consultation with a pediatrician or a pathologist or a first nations person or a forensic person or a police consultation that we would be in a position to pay for those, and not be in a position of requiring those from government which of course diminishes the independence of our look at those deaths.

So our request at this time is not for staff but rather for funds that we can utilize to contract or to consult as required. And there's also a need, we think, to compile information and do some research in this area because the information is complex and it's very difficult to sort it out. And we think that there's . . . the public accountability and the public information that needs to be available requires that there be some better look at the statistics and the literature in this area.

So to be honest, we're not completely clear what our expectations or what the expectations will be on us in terms of this evolving process. Our goal here is to be as accountable to the public as possible. So what I've offered to the Department of Social Services is that our office would function as the independent external body to review all the deaths of children who are receiving services from Social Services. Right now on occasion they contract for some of that external service and in our discussions, my discussions with the department, I have offered that our office could be in a position to provide that independent and external investigation where required.

As well we'd like to widen this to include all deaths. Right now, we're just receiving notification of deaths where there was an undetermined, unnatural, or — I've lost my train of thought, sorry — to widen the net to include natural caused deaths actually, where children were receiving services in some way. Because the information we have from our preliminary studies in this area is that some of those natural-caused deaths we could learn some things from in terms of increased prevention, increased understanding, and hopefully reducing the impact of that on children.

So some of the way that we would operate in terms of our review of those would be dependent on the recommendations that the Child Death Advisory Committee makes to us in their collective wisdom.

I guess on a final note the reason we haven't requested additional staff is that it's very painful work — I'm going to become tearful — and assigning that to a person, in my view, isn't responsible as a manager . . . sorry.

The next area that we've had some discussions also with the Department of Social Services about — but I think more importantly our own work has directed us in this area — is there is a need for a comprehensive and public review of the services provided for children who are living in foster care. The concerns with regards to these children have been identified by a number of different sources. And certainly through the work that we do, the files that we've opened in our office, many of them reflect serious concerns for children who are living in

foster care. And there's a need for a greater understanding of that.

This isn't a Saskatchewan phenomenon, by the way. This is occurring across Canada and throughout the world. The concerns of children in . . . living in the care of the state, and how the state as a parent provide services for children is a serious concern that I think requires significant attention.

We've again tried to be responsible in our request. We're not requesting staff *per se*, we're requesting funds for a one-time project which we would anticipate completing within that year. And if you wish to sort of go through that further I'd be happy to do that.

The last request we have is for some additional funding for public education activities. We are interested in developing youth-friendly materials which can be distributed to children, who we see as our primary audience.

For example, it is our intention in the upcoming year to create and distribute doorknob hangers for all children in foster care, which would give them information about our office and some brief information about their rights to privacy, and to contact their social worker and some of the kinds of things that we think might be helpful to young children who are living in a foster home. This has certainly been already supported by the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association, who are also interested in young people receiving that kind of information.

We're concerned, too, about increased youth participation in decision making and planning. Young people have, in a variety of forums throughout . . . everywhere from the Saskatchewan Labour Board to youth and care networks have been asking . . . young people have been asking for increased voice somewhere. This has been raised with the Saskatchewan children's council, and one of the council's recommendations I know, which is being drafted now, is that there be some kind of a youth round table or youth forum. And our office is prepared to look at coordinating and hosting that kind of an activity. And again our intention would be to be as inclusive as possible of a variety of young people from throughout the province.

So our overall request, we've requested an increased funds for 1998-99 over last year's funding of \$298,285. Our total request is \$782,785. I realize this is a significant percentage increase. Especially after hearing the auditor's discussion, I'm feeling a little reluctant to even discuss this with you, but I feel that I've represented the pressures that we're experiencing in our office as fairly as I can.

I think we're still in a relatively new state, although we're certainly not in our infancy any longer, but our office is continuing to evolve and there's certainly been demands by the public on us. So I look forward to your comments and questions and thanks for your patience in listening to me.

The Chair: — Okay. Thank you, Ms. Parker-Loewen, and I'll now open the floor for questions and comments.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well with the serious matters that you're bringing forward, I don't want to be at all facetious, but I certainly think the kinds of things that the Ombudsman and

yourself have raised are . . . (inaudible) . . . illustrations that a business plan can't cover every situation in life.

The thing I want to say is that I'm very pleased to hear that you're working in the North. I lived in the North for 12 years myself and there's certainly, I think, a lot of work that people would appreciate support with in the community, and I think that's a very good thing. And hopefully with the increased attention that the government's placing on supports to families and communities, we'll see an improvement in the kind of situations that your office is dealing with.

And I want to just emphasize that the Minister of Social Services spoke to me and he's very supportive of your reviews that you're planning to do, and certainly supportive that you have the resources that you need to do them. So I just wanted to mention that.

Again, I hope that when the Ombudsman is done using those computers for a year with the temporary staff, that they might share a little. Obviously they've been sharing already.

This is hard, you know. Again I go back to the Treasury Board experience. I don't think there's a department that comes forward that hasn't got very good ways to spend the money, and you're always trading off kind of support types of services for development types of services and it's a difficult trade-off. But again, the two things that you've outlined that are going to be increasing your costs somewhat this year are both considered to be priorities, so I would just speak in support of that.

The Chair: — Thank you, Ms. Crofford.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you. I know it's very difficult to do the job you're in with limited funds. There's just no . . . I think something like this, it ends up that you always feel that you want to be able to put more money into situations where there's just nobody else to look after the clients that you have to look after.

And I'm interested in asking a question about why you chose . . . you're choosing to put some of your budget money into communications, the nature of the communications. It's a . . .

A Member: — You wonder if it's duplication?

Mr. Kowalsky: — Well I'm wondering whether it's not something that you might be able to advise another part of the government to do and so that you don't have to, you know, sort of take money . . . your budget is not big.

A Member: — Yes.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Then take a portion of your budget. And so I'm just trying to get a rationale for why you want to get into the communications field.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Well firstly, our legislation says — and it's a "shall" clause — that we shall do public education respecting the interests and well-being of children. So I feel a responsibility to do it. But I think also I believe that if we can help people to understand some of the vulnerabilities of children, and some of the ways that as community people they

can be advocates for the children in their own communities, that some of our work may shift to a different kind of responsibility, because really children are a collective responsibility of society.

And so I'm hopeful that we can encourage, through our public education, community members and hopefully young people themselves to be their own best advocates. Parents and community are really strongest advocates for change on behalf of children. And I guess we're committed to that in terms of the thrusts that we'd like to take in our public communications activities.

I think the other thing is we get a lot of pressure, how do children know about you? How do they know to call you? How do children — particularly children who are in care of government, like children in foster homes, group homes, young offender facilities — know that if things aren't going well for them, if they're not being treated respectfully or if something is happening in their lives that they feel fearful about raising with their social worker or other person, how do they know to get a hold of you?

And so that's another very big priority for us, that those young people — we're not saying all of the young people of Saskatchewan — but those young people who are specifically in the care of government need to know that they have the right to access us in the event that they're not being treated in a fair and respectful manner, which of course is the reason why our office came into being in the first place.

So does that answer your question? Murray's reminding me that part of our role is to . . . that we have which would be different from having those activities in a government department, is that we're independent and impartial, and we have the ability to bring forward those issues from an independent point of view.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I was trying to determine whether or not that you could . . . you would be comfortable in asking a certain department to do communications that you thought would be necessary, that should be done, but I don't know.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — We have asked the Department of Social Services, for example, to create a handbook for children in foster care. And they've created a phase 1 of that which I hope they're going to be distributing in the next couple of months. It's now been printed, and they're just producing some regulations to go along with.

But it's a communication which would go to children about age 12 and up. And so in fact this morning I had a further discussion with them about creating more communications which they would produce and distribute to children who are younger.

So I agree with you and I think it is a responsibility of government to provide children with that information. And I think it's also our responsibility to provide them with some different information.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Thanks, Mr. Kowalsky. Are there any further questions or comments? If not, then it would be in order to have

a motion to deal with the Children's Advocate's budget proposal.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Do you have a motion prepared that we . . .

The Chair: — What's the intention of your motion?

Mr. Kowalsky: — To approve the budget.

The Chair: — Yes. If I can suggest some wording for you, then?

That the 1998-99 estimates for the Children's Advocate be approved as submitted in the amount of \$782,785; and that such estimates be forwarded to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Moved by Mr. Kowalsky. Is there a seconder? Ms. Crofford. Discussion on the motion? If not, those in favour please indicate. Down. And opposed? And that's carried. And thank you very much, Ms. Parker-Loewen.

Ms. Parker-Loewen: — Thank you very much. Thank you.

The Chair: — And thank you, Murray. Mr. Knoll.

Ladies and gentlemen of the board, we have about eight minutes left that will permit us to move to item no. 6, if you wish.

And also, I think all members of the board would want to wish a very happy Christmas time to both the Ombudsman and the deputy ombudsman and the Children's Advocate with your families, and we hope that you'll have some time to enjoy and just relax away from all the pressures of dealing with the problems of Saskatchewan you attend to on a regular basis. And please extend that to your staff as well. Merry Christmas to you. Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen of the board, item no. 6 is a special warrant request which you find in your meeting materials under item no. 6. You will see, and I'll outline it to you, you will see it is a special warrant request in the amount of \$310,000.

If I may just quickly move through the amount for it and start with the biggest part first, which relates to the Legislative Library and comes to a grand total of \$404,000. Obviously, other than that, there is more reduction in anticipated spending than excess, but that is by far the biggest factor. And as you will be aware, attached to that outline sheet, which is item no. 6, you will have an attachment entitled, Legislative Library mobile shelving proposal. This is not a new item to you, I know, and was on the list of proposals by the library last year that has become extremely magnified by the realities of the relocations required by the renovations of the building.

So not only is there the ongoing need for shelving to store the materials of the library, but it's become exacerbated, because in addition we're going to have to move a whole number of things out of the building now. And this comes then as a recommendation in the warrant to do what is inevitable, that must be done, and do it now to prevent unnecessary or avoidable costs related to the storage — those library materials

that must be relocated to the Walter Scott Building outside of the library upstairs as we know it here.

It's expected that with this shelving proposal, which is the \$351,000 item — it's actually \$340,000 — that this will meet the library storage space requirements for at least 10 years. So this is something that's exacerbated by the renovations and it also provides then a long-term solution to a problem that's been growing, as you're aware. It also permits a more efficient use of the staff when we're in this temporary period because the materials will be then located in a single place and not in two places. And yes . . . is it which?

Mr. Boyd: — What is mobile shelving?

The Chair: — Oh, it's shelving that's in essence on wheels so that what you . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, it's on a track and what you . . . The advantage of it, Bill, is that it makes much more efficient use of space because what you don't have to have is all the space between shelves. And you'll see it often in museums where they'll have all of their shelves rolled together and you just have to . . . you can literally, I think, double — well probably more than that actually — the space that's required to be rented to hold it in.

Ms. Ronyk: — It has a mechanism, that is extensive, that allows you to do that with tons of books with just a very little pressure of the hand. It's a crank system.

Mr. Whitmore: — If you wanted to . . . If I could add, if you wanted to see an example of the library presently that is . . . that the Department of Agriculture has in the Walter Scott Building, it's on mobile shelving. And that will give you the example, a direct example, how it works.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — What's the function of this shelving after renovations? Like I understand we got to move the books.

The Chair: — There is the long-term need for it. We have books now currently being stored . . . in which locations?

Ms. Ronyk: — The old Health building and in Walter Scott and here in the Legislative Building. And we came to the board last year with the request because we're full. Those places are full; we have no more room. And this year it's just exacerbated by the move. But we can make this move into mobile shelving and have a lot of extra room that will give us 10 years of space.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Is there an alternative to this? What would you do with these books if we didn't spend this money, is what I want to know.

Ms. Ronyk: — The alternative is that we will have to rent more space to store them in. And it'll have to be more remote space because there isn't enough room in Walter Scott to store them conventionally.

The Chair: — And it has staffing implications because they're in more places as well.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — So you'd have books all over the place?

The Chair: — Yes, and the . . . What had been contemplated from the discussion from the board last year, I think, was that this is something that could be done in two or three stages. But what's really pressed the issue, last year when that was being proposed, the decision about the renovations had not been done. And as you know, what's going to happen here is that, just shortly, there will be a good chunk of the east wing of our building that is going to have to move out. A number of these proposals in this and the other budget will relate to the costs of moving staffs and services out of the building.

So that's what brings this forward, because that need to have to not only have things outside of the building in two locations, but get literally, get a lot of storage out of this building, means that in the long-run it is substantially more cost effective to do it now and get it . . . what must be done.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Somebody is going to have a tough budget. Somebody's gone today.

Ms. Ronyk: — And it also enables us to move these fragile library documents less than we will have to otherwise. We'll have to move them some place and after renovations we'll have to move them again. And it would seriously impact on service if these books were — and the materials; it's not all books, it's newspapers and many other kinds of documents — if they were all moved to more locations and remote locations it would seriously impact the service that the library's able to provide.

Mr. McLane: — Have you tendered to do this or . . .

The Chair: — Yes, it's been tendered but not . . .

Ms. Ronyk: — No, no. It hasn't been tendered. We're ready to go to tender next week if we get approval.

Mr. McLane: — So this rate you're talking about is a . . .

Ms. Ronyk: — It's an estimate yet. We hope that our tender may come in less than that, but . . .

The Chair: — A tender has been drafted?

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes, it's secured.

The Chair: — A tender has been drafted but not let.

And I point out as well, as it says in here, the movement of these materials, many of which are regularly drawn from in response to requests — this is materials that is used regularly in response to requests from caucuses and the elected members — and literally needs to move out of the building by the end of February of next year.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well we've been putting, I think, this purchase and the reorganizing of the books off for, I don't know how many budget years now. I think it's been a request for a considerable period of time.

The Chair: — Yes, it's not new.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And I can understand the pressures in terms of the building move, and if at some point in time

we're going to have to buy the storage at any rate, it wouldn't make, I guess, much sense to do a temporary move into whatever and I don't know how that would work.

I mean it's an awful lot of money here. We have been spending lots of money today; and I guess I can support this. I do it reluctantly, but I guess it probably over the long haul will make the best, you know, the best out of a tough situation here with the move. At least we'll have something to work with.

The Chair: — Well just to support that too, Mr. Lautermilch — in terms of just immediate impact, what it does is it reduces by \$10,000 a year our space rental for stuff that we're storing right now, plus eliminates the need to have to rent some in addition to that. So if we don't do this, I think we're easily talking \$20,000 for space rental that's not required if you do this, in this year. So that's why it speaks to some of the cost efficiency if something needs to be attended to at some point in time.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I just want to ask about the nature of a special warrant request. This is not a budget item now; it's a special warrant. Does that mean it'll be spent in this current fiscal year?

The Chair: — That's right.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Why '97-98? Going into . . . yes, I guess the current year goes into '98.

The Chair: — Yes. And this is one because the move has to take place by the end of February. This is why we . . . if this is approved tonight, we start to move tomorrow in terms of the call for tender to get this done, because the books have got to be out of the building by the end of February to accommodate the renovations that are going to take place in the building as we start to close down rooms that we can use here. So the . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Just one more question. Like, what kind of a physical size, like what kind of a room will these shelves fit into? I've been . . . (inaudible) . . . all of my working life. I can't fathom 350 . . .

The Chair: — Well, Mr. Lautermilch, if you'd spent some of it in the library, it'd be easier to imagine. No, just kidding, just kidding.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — It's okay.

Ms. Ronyk: — It will go into our existing space in Walter Scott, which is . . . I don't know how big to tell you it is. Oh, it's probably at least four or five times this size.

Mr. Boyd: — And it costs \$10,000 a year?

Ms. Ronyk: — To rent?

Mr. Boyd: — Yes.

Ms. Ronyk: — No, that space is . . .

The Chair: — No, that's not this . . . there's \$10,000 in another building that we would eliminate by moving it all to Walter Scott.

Mr. Boyd: — How much would it cost to accommodate this?

Ms. Ronyk: — The space, we already pay rent for that space of, well in this current fiscal year it was around \$33,000.

Mr. Kowalsky: — But that space has got fixed shelving.

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes.

Mr. Kowalsky: — But going to this method . . .

The Chair: — We can eliminate the 10,000 plus whatever we'd have to store to move stuff out of the building here.

Mr. Boyd: — Well how much would that cost?

The Chair: — In terms of storage outside of Walter Scott? I think we are saying easily 20,000 a year.

Mr. Boyd: — At \$20,000 a year, the problem could be solved for 20 years for this \$404,000.

The Chair: — Well, but that's if you were going to take materials that are currently being used to provide responses to requests and not make them available. You're making them extremely restricted in their availability for the function of the library to respond to requests.

Ms. Ronyk: — Right now, as I said, we are paying 33,000 and that's going up with this next fiscal year for that space and we would need almost that much space again to store the stuff that has to be moved.

Mr. Boyd: — \$33,000 would solve it for 13 years.

Mr. Whitmore: — What we're paying right now.

The Chair: — Well, yes. Not quite that, but 351 . . .

Mr. Boyd: — And you are anticipating this will handle it for 10 years.

The Chair: — Yes.

Mr. Whitmore: — Another thing regarding this shelving, if I'm correct, would also modify the Walter Scott facility for proper climate control too for the storage of the books.

Ms. Ronyk: — No, that isn't . . .

Mr. Whitmore: — Oh, that isn't in this time. Okay.

Ms. Ronyk: — They will be doing some work on the lighting to make it . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — So it's a trade-off between paying rent than buying these over say a 10-, 11-, or 12-year period.

Ms. Ronyk: — Well, and it's more than the rent though because the other costs and the service will suffer. There will be staff costs if we're scattered among remote locations. The time it takes to retrieve something in the Gemini Warehouse is . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — So then you've got the staff running back and forth is what you're saying.

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And this would bring them all into the library once it's renovated? Is that . . .

Mr. Boyd: — No, no, no. This isn't going in the library, is it?

The Chair: — No, no, no. It's going to the Walter Scott Building.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — It's going into one building as opposed to a bunch?

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes.

The Chair: — Yes.

Ms. Ronyk: — It's going to go into our existing space in Walter Scott, the space we already have. We're going to just put more . . .

The Chair: — And it will accommodate the increase — I mean one of the things in the library is you're storing materials that are being drawn from to respond to a request to provide information, is it grows every year. So this would accommodate the storage demands now plus the anticipated growth over the next 10 years. So that's why I say, Bill, it's not quite . . .

Mr. Boyd: — What kind of information are we keeping here? Are you keeping old newspapers? My grandmother quit doing that 40 years ago.

Ms. Ronyk: — We are . . .

Mr. Boyd: — You can get that kind of stuff up from the publication themselves; we don't have to store it for them.

Ms. Ronyk: — Our collection is weeded and reviewed constantly so that we're not keeping stuff we don't need to keep. We are required . . . we're depository for government records. We have to keep them. The law says we have to keep them. We're depository for national government records; we're depository for American government records and we have agreements with other libraries.

Mr. Boyd: — This is all kept in hard copy.

Ms. Ronyk: — No, it isn't. We have a growing amount of it that is purchased or converted to electronic format.

Mr. Boyd: — Which could be stored on a disk.

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes, or microfilm, which is much cheaper for us to produce. We can't produce our own disks at the moment.

The Chair: — But I think the life of the shelving would be hard copy kinds of things largely, would it?

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes.

The Chair: — Yes, so you're growing two ways. One's in terms of hard copy and you try to minimize that. This is one of the consequences of living in the information age I'm afraid.

Ms. Ronyk: — I would suggest that the board maybe want to hear from Marian Powell, the librarian, who can better explain and describe the reasons for the requirements, the request.

Mr. McLane: — Is there any more space at the Walter Scott Building?

The Chair: — Is there more there right now?

Mr. McLane: — Well could there be more space made available?

Ms. Ronyk: — Not without moving someone else out.

Mr. McLane: — Well we have too many bureaucrats anyhow, so I guess that would be a start . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, I mean what are they doing?

The Chair: — Order, order, order, order.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — There's no media here, guys . . . (inaudible) . . . just be yourselves.

The Chair: — Order, order, order, order. Now we're all practising. Order, order, order, order.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — To me this is the logic: you pay 30,000 year in rent or you pay for the shelves. You got the shelves.

The Chair: — We need to do it eventually, I think.

Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Lautermilch, I guess I would look at it and say \$30,000 against a \$400,000 tab. If you're in your business, how would you look at it?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well I know how I'd look at it.

Mr. Kowalsky: — I just wanted to ask a question about when you have a . . . This, I think, involves the levelling of the floor, pouring a new concrete floor, I think, because that floor, if I remember right, is sort of chunky. And then putting tracks on the floor.

The Chair: — That's right.

Mr. Kowalsky: — And then purchasing the shelving that slides back and forth on there. So presumably half of that shelving is going to be empty for awhile. And then only a quarter of it's going to be empty, and then only an eighth of it's going to be empty. Is there a possibility of deferring the purchasing of some of the shelves and yet keeping them on order, somehow, knowing that you can get them, say five or seven years . . .

Mr. Boyd: — This is a tender that stretches out for 10 years.

Ms. Ronyk: — We have already been making plans for the use of some of the excess space. One, for example, the Legislative Assembly records that must be kept permanently — the House

documents. The Archives no longer will accept them because they're out of space. And we're desperately needing space and now we'll be able to put some of those in the library shelving, which is controlled. There's no public access there so we think it would be reasonably safe to do that.

And there is potential as well for some of that space to be used on an interim basis by other institutions like the Archives or the Provincial Library.

Mr. Kowalsky: — By space, you mean shelf space.

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Okay.

The Chair: — Mr. Whitmore. Are you done, Mr. Kowalsky?

Mr. Kowalsky: — I'm done.

The Chair: — Okay. Mr. Whitmore and then Mr. Boyd.

Mr. Whitmore: — At some point in time, when one is making a decision and looking at a grain bin that's been sitting on a wooden floor for 10 or 15 years and after moisture gets in and it starts to rot, you can continue to repair that grain floor, but at some point in time you have to make the decision whether you put a steel hopper underneath or concrete so you can save the rest of the bin.

To me, I relate it to the same description in terms of the library, in terms of preservation of the books. At some point in time you've got to make the big capital decision to secure the long-term viability of your asset. And that's what the decision is today. Basis rent, or whatever, at some point in time you got to secure the capital asset. And to me, that's what we're doing today, is securing the capital asset.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Whitmore.

Mr. Boyd: — Well to continue upon your agricultural theme, I suppose you could look at it in that respect. One might look at it in a slightly different respect, that if you were looking at a difference between a storage facility for the grain that you're about to grow, or putting inputs into the grain itself prior to deciding whether or not you needed storage, you'd probably look at it a little bit differently. Many astute farmers would say maybe you should grow the grain before you're too concerned about what you're going to do with it afterwards.

Mr. Whitmore: — That happens sometimes when you have the grain on the ground and you have to act to put it somewhere.

Mr. Boyd: — Yes, in the elevator system is where you'd want to put it.

But anyway, I guess I will oppose this, Mr. Chairman, just on the basis that I think it's an extravagant . . . an expenditure that probably isn't something that the taxpayers of Saskatchewan would feel is a high priority to them. In an era when we have waiting-lists in health care facilities and all of those kinds of things, I would suspect a lot of people would be of the opinion that this is perhaps something less of a priority than other areas.

The Chair: — Okay.

Mr. McLane: — Could I ask a question . . . (inaudible) . . . this page?

The Chair: — You sure can, Mr. McLane.

Mr. McLane: — Who does the Legislative Assembly pay the \$30,000 rent to?

The Chair: — To SPMC.

Mr. McLane: — Which is a form of government; which is taxpayers' money. So really, by the renting of the space, looking at the taxpayers' money, the government's money, it really doesn't cost us anything. It's a transfer of funds from this institution to SPMC.

The Chair: — Well, yes.

Mr. McLane: — So in that respect it would make some sense that it would be a lot cheaper for the taxpayers of the province if we could find more space there of some way or some form. And really would end up costing the taxpayers of the province nothing.

The Chair: — The Clerk advises me, Mr. McLane, that we are advised that SPMC in this case doesn't have more space available, and so there would be a payment of rent to someone outside of currently existing storage space.

Mr. McLane: — What about the Tommy Douglas Building?

Mr. Boyd: — Full up.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well don't forget one . . . (inaudible) . . . the staff are being moved all over . . .

The Chair: — Yes. I'm not in a position to say what, you know, where it is or isn't. Is there any further discussion? Is there someone wishing to make a motion?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well I think I'll move this.

The Chair: — Okay.

Mr. Boyd: — In its entirety?

The Chair: — The special warrant request is 310,000, is what the special warrant request is.

Mr. McLane: — Would it be in order for the motion to be, if it could, one that we would pass after it's been at least tendered as opposed to saying it's getting a wide-open scope? We can't say it's 310 because we don't know it will be 310. It could be 350.

Mr. Boyd: — That would be maxed out, I guess.

The Chair: — It would be required . . . the Legislative Assembly would have to, as with . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — This would be required because you can't . . . (inaudible) . . . over that was with . . . (inaudible)

. . . special . . .

The Chair: — As with the budget, you've got to live within your budget allocated. And that's why when we come here with this allocation at this point in time, the special warrant is not just for the unplanned item but it takes into account as well some things that were planned to be spent that weren't. So you, are by approving this, in effect making the totality a maximum.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Glenn, did you pursue . . . could you have them pursue, you know, a cheaper way to do this. This is one heck of a whack of money. And I mean I understand, you know, what your needs are, what your requirements are, and I'm willing to support this if there's no other way to get this done. But I mean I . . .

Ms. Ronyk: — We have I think done that. It's just that our timelines mean that the library has to move out in February.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Look, can we sleep on this tonight? Why don't we stand this thing for tonight and let's come back to it tomorrow.

Ms. Ronyk: — Marian could address it better.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think that's a better idea. I might want to sleep on this a bit myself and give this some thought.

The Chair: — Yes and in fairness I think in my judgement as well, is that your question has been addressed. The attempt has been made to do that. Mr. Kowalsky, did you . . .

Mr. Kowalsky: — I'll stand.

The Chair: — Yes. Okay, well why don't we bring this forward and start with this item tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock. And until that time then the meeting stands recessed.

The meeting adjourned at 10:18 p.m.

The Chair: — I'll call the meeting to order. Mr. McLane has advised the Chair that he won't be here in time for the start of the meeting and so we won't wait for him and we will proceed.

Where we left off last evening is on item no. 6. We're dealing with the special warrant request and we were addressing the . . . in the context of the \$310,000 special warrant request, the largest item within that which relates to the shelving, the mobile shelving for use by the library, as exacerbated significantly by the required movements related to the renovations of the building.

This will not be an unfamiliar theme because that certainly impacts as well on our budget proposal that you'll see as well. And I have Marian Powell, who is our librarian everyone will know, here to assist us in the discussion of this. But first of all, Mr. Lautermilch.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I know Mr. McLane's schedule is busy, but in reviewing *Hansard* and his attendance to this board, I'd like to know when members of this board were notified of the dates? Maybe we're not giving Mr. McLane enough advance warning so that he can clear his calendar. I'd just like to know what the length of duration between when we were notified of these dates.

The Chair: — There was a memo sent to all members of the board dated November 26 from myself and identifying these dates and times.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Did all members agree with the dates?

The Chair: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well maybe you could just, if you would, just have a chat with Mr. McLane and maybe ask him if we need to give him more time to clear his calendar for these meetings.

The Chair: — The Chair will work together with all members to do the best we can to facilitate the attendance at meetings.

Okay, let us now return to the special warrant, and we have the ability to have a more comprehensive description and response to your questions related to the Legislative Library part of the proposal.

And I think for that the wisest thing to do is to turn the microphone here over to Marion Powell and ask her to give us a description of the special warrant recommendations which, I also must point out to you, do influence the budgetary requests for 1998-99 because those, the budgetary requests for library there, are influenced by the assumption of the approval of the special warrant — just to put it into context. Marion.

Ms. Powell: — Thank you very much. Yes, for planning purposes we adopted the stance that the assumption was made that mobile shelving would be installed in some form or other. Perhaps what I could do — and I hope I will touch on some of the questions you asked last night and I'm sorry I wasn't here at the time they came up — I should perhaps tell you what the

circumstance is that we're facing here.

As the board recalls, last budget cycle we brought forward a B budget proposal that proposed a three-year phase-in of mobile shelving in the same area, Walter Scott. And that proposal, at that time, would have resulted in no new space in the first year when we did the first half of the facility. The first new space would be made available in year two.

Now what's happened in the meantime is that we've had the announcement of the restoration of the Legislative Building. And that's significant, first of all, in that all of my staff office, except my own, and our large stack area in the Legislative Building will be immediately affected by the restoration. One area is where the cat will drive in to start the work, so we vacate that first. We will be back in last. And the second area, with staff and collections, is affected immediately by the work on the dome, and once again, we will be out immediately and we'll be back last.

So this has further complicated our already very significant space crisis. It doesn't allow us to come forward with a phased-in approach as we had attempted last year. First of all, last year it was tabled, and I'm very pleased with the reception that the board gave me and allowed me the opportunity to show them the areas and to demonstrate the crisis. Unfortunately the crisis is exacerbated.

And what happened this week just made it worse. We received notification from SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) that they want us out of our other storage area in old Health by the end of the fiscal year. Presently it's our understanding that they want us out of the Legislative Building space in February, 1998. So we have very, very short time here.

Even our proposal for the mobile shelving is nip and tuck with time deadlines for manufacture, installation, and movement of materials. So this is why we're coming forward at this time with a very large request. It was never our intention to do it in one year. Unfortunately we've been captured by events.

One thing that has also happened — we have not been working alone. We've been working with SPMC who have tried valiantly to find us alternative space. We're at the position right now, facing February '98, that they have not been able to identify my staff office space anywhere, and they have been unable to find stack space for me and have indicated we should pursue the mobile shelving in our existing space as the best option.

One of our proposals in terms of less than the full amount of mobile shelving would naturally be to close more collections and store them at Gemini. But equally I'm advised there is no space there. So we're really caught. We have a space problem, we have a deadline problem, and unfortunately, virtually none of it is under our control.

I understand yesterday evening there were a number of questions and perhaps I could quickly answer a couple of them which will perhaps assist those who were asking them in the deliberation. One of the questions was: what's there, why does it matter.

Well basically for a very long time upwards of three-quarters of our book collection, our government documents collection, all of our materials have been located in those two storage locations outside the building, now supplemented by our small space at Gemini. The material that is there isn't just old material.

Library collections of all kinds — as recent as 1992 publication dates for government publications and 1997, things we've bought this year in some book classifications — have of necessity been located in the storage location at Walter Scott. We pull materials from those locations every day, all year round. The materials presently located in the Legislative Building stack area, we pull many times a day. This material has to go somewhere else during the building restoration.

And the largest proportion of the materials over there, a substantial amount, are government publications which we have received on deposit. We receive them as an exchange library with a variety of governments. We do not pay for them. We could never afford to buy them. It's estimated that our deposit with one jurisdiction alone is worth \$250,000 a year. We would never have a book budget big enough to pay for this stuff. But it comes with strings. We cannot get rid of them. We must keep them, and we must make them accessible.

So we've got very important materials both that we use all the time for our clients, for you, for your staff, for the public, for your constituency office, and we do have a legal requirement to make them accessible and to keep them. So that's what's there.

We had another question about what kind of space can we create by this new mobile shelving. The expectation of installing mobile shelving in the Walter Scott area would be to, almost but not quite, double the capacity. Because there are pillars involved, we won't get 100 per cent increase in our space. And in real numbers, that means we would increase our shelf capacity from 7,000 linear feet to 14,000 linear feet.

Because we are now in a position that we need to move all this material from old Health and from Walter Scott, and as well, we have other collections that are boxed right now because there's no shelving. When we move all of those in, we will have occupied 11,850 of those 14,000 square feet right away, without adding another book, without doing the normal annual transfer of several thousand government documents.

That will give us our estimated 600 lineal feet per year growth for the next 10 years and no more. So we're not looking at an empty warehouse here. This is why the decision to come to you seeking the whole restoration of the area is significant. Last year we didn't have the restoration of the building to deal with; last week we didn't have old Health to vacate. We're really in a crisis situation here.

The Chair: — Then let me open the floor for questions or discussion related to the . . . we're on the specific area, but I think anything that is at all related to library. We turn to the members. Are there any questions or comments?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well it would sound to me after your explanation that you are certainly under some pressures. As I understand it, you would fill over 11,000 to 14,000 lineal

feet and that that would then give you 10 years of space to be able to fill? You'd be consolidating all of this into one location?

Ms. Powell: — Yes, that's right. And in fact, as the Speaker has mentioned, this has an implication on our budget when we go to the '98-99 budget figures. We have presumed the discontinuance of rent on the old Health space. We would have to add some rent back in for somewhere if SPMC can identify space for us, but they haven't been able to so far. And I guess our February deadline is the kicker for everybody here.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well it's a difficult expenditure I know. And I'm assuming, given the comments yesterday, that this money will be spent a dozen times over if we approve this special warrant today. My guess would be the argument will be . . . the political argument will be that you've got money for shelves but you haven't got money for health and you haven't got money for education. I can see that rolling out.

But I think in terms of what you are required and the documents that are under your care, it would be irresponsible for us. And in light of the fact that you're going to be dislocated because of the repairs to the Legislative Building, I'm of the opinion it would be inappropriate for us not to approve this. It's an expenditure, I think, that all of us would rather not have to make, and you can tell from the hesitancy and the discussions around the board here for the last couple of years, Marian, I think . . .

Ms. Powell: — One thing may help, if I may say. The figure that you see before you is an estimate. It's based on information that we were given by one vendor who's been working with us on the proposals for mobile shelving for a number of years.

Naturally this will be tendered. One of the options which will go in that tender is that the successful vendor be able to convert the cantilever library shelving which occupies part of the space at Walter Scott. We don't have a lot of proper library shelving and only that shelving can be converted to rails. That could likely reduce the actual cost by as much as \$80,000 and we would certainly do that.

We budgeted the full figure that we were given because we had to use something for a calculation. We don't know what the tender is going to give us and we don't know if every vendor feels they can convert these shelves. I think that you can take it as a given that we would not spend the money we didn't need, but we felt we had to put the full estimate from the initial vendor who's been helping us describe the project. We do expect a tender to come in lower, but we think we can't start too much lower.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well I guess having listened to your argument — and I'm assuming there'll be more debate on this that I will want to hear — but listening to your explanation I think we have really no alternative. But I'll defer to other members for comment at this time.

Ms. Powell: — Perhaps one of the things we should look at is the cost of doing nothing. I means there's always a cost of doing nothing.

At the present time when we're already stretched, we estimate

that it's costing us a full half-person year of a technician to constantly shift materials because we're full. If we didn't do anything but try to move existing materials on existing shelves into existing space at Walter Scott, first of all, we couldn't do it all.

But secondly, we would be 120 per cent full. We couldn't shelve everything. We couldn't move in the aisles. We couldn't find anything. We would be losing a lot of money down the tubes for unnecessary work, a lot of staff costs. We would be paying, continuing to pay rent for stored materials in Gemini, for example, that cannot be accessed. I mean it's just sitting there in a box, and if we needed it on an emergency basis for the House, we couldn't ever find it.

So you know there's ongoing costs that are money down the drain. And when you add those in to the rent that we pay for Walter Scott right now — we last week also were given a rent figure which I'm afraid we didn't receive before the budget went out in its higher — we're trying to use the same space which presently costs us \$53,000 a year twice as well. If we needed twice as much space, it would be \$100,000 a year and it starts to sound pretty economic to do mobile shelving.

The Chair: — Would there be staffing cost implications as well?

Ms. Powell: — Yes, there certainly would. It would very much depend where we were able to find any alternative space for the part of the collection we couldn't accommodate at all.

Right now we run very cheaply. We have little wee girls who go over on foot and pull things every single day. If we had to send them way out to an industrial area or somewhere else, they'd have to have a vehicle. They'd have to go less frequently and be able to carry heavier weights. It would cost us a lot more money because the area couldn't be cabbed and we couldn't send a courier. So we'd be looking at significant costs. For example a CVA (Central Vehicle Agency) van, \$500 a month without gas. So you look at that on the budget as well.

So there are a variety of other costs that would be incurred depending on where any material could be located. I certainly haven't been advised by SPMC that they've found any and they've been looking very hard for us.

The Chair: — I think, members, you'll note that the . . . it's probably the library that is more than any other single service in the building that's affected by the building renovations. Largely, what we've been talking about today are those items about the library which you don't see when you, quote, walk into the library as you know it on the main floor.

But in fact with the building restoration taking place, there will also, and that is part of the special warrant as well here as well, that library itself will actually shrink as some necessary renovations have to be done on a temporary basis there to make better use of the space that we have for storage just within that room and reduce the amount of space that's available for people who would quote, use the library, as you'd understand it when you walked into that building right now.

Is there any further discussion, first of all, on the library items

in total? Or if not there, on any other discussion or questions related to the special warrant request? And as Ms. Powell has said, what is estimated here is a tender which must be proceeded with post haste. And there is a possibility that it could come in at less than this — some real possibility of that — and of course any money that's not required to be spent wouldn't be spent.

Any further discussion? If not, then it would be in order to have a motion. Does someone wish to move a motion? Mr. Whitmore.

Mr. Whitmore: — I would like to move the motion that we authorize the special warrant vote 021 of \$310,000 by the Board of Internal Economy.

The Chair: — Okay. Can I just recommend a slight change in wording, if you don't mind, for your consideration: that the special warrant request for legislation vote 21 for the 1997-98 fiscal year in the amount of \$310,000 be approved. Is that acceptable to you?

Mr. Whitmore: — Great.

The Chair: — Okay. Is there a seconder for that motion? Ms. Crofford. Discussion on the motion? Those in favour? Opposed? And that's carried. And thank you, Marian, for your assistance.

Now if we can move ourselves forward to item no. 7 which is the budget for the office of the Legislative Assembly.

Now to assist us in the Legislative Assembly proposal we have a number of people who I think will be familiar to you, but may not all be familiar to all of you. And so what I would like to do is just introduce them and ask them to just nod or wave or smile or do a short tap dance, or whatever they consider to be appropriate, so that you can recognize our officials, and these are the people who are involved in leadership capacities in the provision of Legislative Assembly services to members.

First of all then, everyone will know of course the Clerk of the Assembly, Gwenn Ronyk; our Deputy Clerk, Greg Putz is here — here's Greg. Over here, Marian Powell, the Legislative Librarian who you've just heard from. And Judy Brennan, the assistant legislative librarian; Linda Kaminski, director of personnel administrative services; Marilyn Borowski — where's Marilyn? Oh here, sitting . . . Good to see you, Marilyn. Marilyn is the director of financial services. And Chris Hecht is our systems administrator; Bob Cosman, the Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk; and Gary Ward, over here, who is our director of broadcasting. I think those are all familiar faces and people, but those will be the people that I'll be drawing from to assist in the presentation of this budget proposal to you.

Well first of all, if I can refer you to . . . you will have received a budget document which outlines the budget request to you. And if I can refer you, first of all, to the very first page of that which is entitled "Summary One" and begin with a description of the big picture as it affects the Legislative Assembly in 1998-99. And correspondingly then, the budget request that comes to the board related to the operations of the Legislative

Assembly Office.

To start with the absolute conclusion first then, you will note that whereas there has, in the 1997-98 estimates, approval at last year's board decision for the Legislative Assembly Office was 14,851,000; that the budgetary request this year is 14,800 thousand. Sorry, it was 14,851,000 and the budgetary request is \$14,800,320, which is a reduction of nearly \$51,000m and a .34 per cent budget reduction over last year is what's requested in this budget proposal.

If I could just outline to you then and highlight some of those items, we'll deal with all of them in more detail as you would wish as we go through the budget proposal line by line. And I'm going to propose to you that we proceed in the same way we have in previous years. That after having the summary, that we'll then deal with each individual category and deal with it page by page so as to be able to respond to any . . . the most specific of questions that you may wish to ask.

On the budget there are some assumptions here that are being made that are built into this budget proposal and we will . . . The budget will, in making comparison, reflect it . . . it shows you '96-97 actual expenditures in each category; '97-98 approved expenditures in each category, and then '98-99 request in each category.

In the '96-97 expenditure category then, that's based on the fact that there was 74 sitting days of the Legislative Assembly. And in our world it's the number of sitting days and the numbers of members of the Legislative Assembly that will be the two most significant factors that will influence increases or decreases on a year-to-year basis.

In the current fiscal year, '96 — sorry, '97-98, to date there have been 35 sitting days and that's as of today. Obviously there will be an increase in that number next week and we certainly would anticipate that there will be an increase in that number again there sometime prior to the end of the fiscal year, before the end of March.

The estimates that are before you assume that the cost of living increase is 1 per cent and so that's the assumption that is operative throughout. And that is based on our best assessment of the consumer price index for Saskatchewan and that that would apply then on all of those matters that are indexed.

Now as you know, there are two elements to our budget. One is statutory, and then the other is what we call budgetary.

Statutory are those items in our expenditures that flow out of legislation. They are directly related of course to the directives that the board passes pursuant to its authority and requirement under The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. And so those will be matters about which we will have less control and are obviously, as I said before, largely determined by the numbers of the members of the Legislative Assembly and the number of sitting days of the House, and also are influenced of course by things like the activities of Legislative Assembly committees. So they will relate to what is required by law to permit the system of parliamentary democracy to function.

And in the statutory estimates area then you see that overall there is a budget forecast here of a reduction of \$7,000 in total. The big ticket items that lead to that is the 1 per cent increase that flows to all of those statutory requirements, which totals 71,500. You'll see them all listed individually there.

And then there will be a decrease here that has to do with the to-ing and fro-ing of the make-up of caucuses. As you know, since the last fiscal year began, the current fiscal year began, there has been a change in the make-up of our caucuses in Saskatchewan.

In budgetary terms, the consequence of which is we have two fewer members of the legislature who are in a caucus, and therefore, two more members who are independents. And therefore, the formulas related to funding of caucuses are reduced on the one hand; funding to independents, on the other hand, is increased. But the net effect after all of that is a reduction to the Legislative Assembly office budget of \$25,000.

You'll note, as well, that we caught an error that we apologize for that was related to the formula used in last year's budgetary proposal, and it was having to do with the reduction of members of the Legislative Assembly of 66 to 58, and in the area of provisions of members' secretaries and that was in the amount of \$84,000 which is obviously not expended and reflects a change in what you will see before you in the form of requests.

So all of that in the statutory area; those are the big ticket items but resulting in a reduced request in the amount of \$7,000.

Now, on the budgetary estimate side; this is the side over which we have more control for the board's decision because these will have to do, then, with the administration of the Legislative Assembly. You will note as you look at it on the big picture, that it is somewhat influenced this year by the building and restorations. You've heard some of that described to you just a few moments ago in terms of library impact. But there are other impacts as well.

One of the things that members will note is that — not in the session next week, but when we're here for the spring sitting of the legislature — *Hansard* will no longer be located in this building. It has to literally up and move out of the building as well.

So not only is a large amount of our library services, our complete *Hansard* operation will be out of the building as well. So we've got some costs that affect our budget that relate to that reality. Now, those are temporary decisions but temporary in the context of years, not months.

Now, on the budgetary estimate side, the net request to you is a reduction of \$43,680 in total with all the to-ing and fro-ing there and some of those relate to decreases and some of those relate to increases. And if I can just highlight again the big ticket items that reflect the overall big picture of the operation of Legislative Assembly.

One area where there will be substantial reduction in expenditure is in the area of broadcast services even though in fact what is recommended to you we will increase the coverage

of the legislature with less money. And what you will note when you slide down to item no. 6, broadcast services, there is an increase there in AV (audiovisual) equipment of \$41,000, the large bulk of which is related to the provision of technology to cable companies in Saskatchewan to expand our legislative channel coverage in another 28 constituencies.

You will know that last year what we were able to do was to move our Legislative Assembly, the legislative channel, to every constituency in the province. It is true that today there is no single constituency in Saskatchewan that doesn't have legislative coverage in at least its community with the largest number of cable subscribers. In some constituencies, for example, the Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, P.A. (Prince Albert), and a few others, the legislative channel is available in absolutely, potentially absolutely, every household — there's no room for expansion.

But in this budget there is a proposal that we will expand to include, in addition to that at least, the community with the second-largest number of cable subscribers and that will effect an increased coverage of the legislative channel in 28 constituencies around the province.

But that is offset by the fact that Gary Ward was able to renegotiate our contract for the carrying of the legislative channel signal and you'll see that in the amount of reduction of \$98,300 reduction there in terms of the lease that we have with SaskTel for the carrying of the signal. So in broadcast services, because of . . . part of this is related to advancement in technology and the satellite signal but also attention to our contract.

Printing costs for *Hansard* — you'll know again here's technology that we, because of a previous decision of this board to move ahead with the bringing of the legislative channel onto the Internet and increasing the capacity of Saskatchewan people remarkably, actually, to have access to the verbatim coverage of the proceedings of the legislature and committees, that one of the decisions that was made last year was to eliminate the printing of the *Hansard* and large distributions we had done previously of legislative committees, and to assess the effectiveness of that with the consideration that this budget then about doing the same for the *Hansard* for the Legislative Assembly itself.

And we've done an assessment of our experience with the elimination of the printing of *Hansard* except for, basically, internal use here and have concluded that with a very, very minimal, if in fact any effect at all, that we can eliminate the mass printing of the *Hansard* of the Legislative Assembly. And our experience with the use of the Internet is that we believe in net total, what we in fact have got is increased access and increased use of access to the *Hansards* at less cost. And so part of this proposal then is to recommend to you that we discontinue the mass printing of *Hansards*.

We will do some internal printing for the use of members in the House and that sort of thing, so the things that members have been used to in terms of carrying out their duties of the Legislative Assembly. But that only on request then would we respond to outside printed copy of *Hansard* and that the world at large that uses *Hansard* would access through the Internet.

As a matter of fact, not only did that increase access, it made it much quicker. And in fact, since we've been on the Internet, *Hansard* has been available to the public sooner on Internet format than it's been to the members in printed format as a matter of fact. So by the time the members get their printed *Hansard* the next morning in the legislature here, *Hansard* has been available to the public for several hours.

So what happens is that when the House concludes — whether it's in the afternoon or evening — that's in through our *Hansard* that is inputted and put onto the system. And sometime in the middle of the night, for those who are having a hard time sleeping and want to get up and wonder what happened in the legislature the day before, they can get up and read that and either fall fast asleep again or not be able sleep for the rest of the night, I'm not sure, depending on how they respond to what they see. All of this occurs, of course, before the MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) are even out of bed the next morning.

So anyhow, this is why you're getting these calls in the morning before you head off to work. So anyhow, here again the net saving to our budget is \$88,320 by reducing the cost of *Hansard*. And that's proposed to you.

You'll see as well you made some decisions related to security of the building last year in expenditure of equipment, which was done and is no longer needed to be part of the budget. And so our security equipment request is reduced by \$69,000.

By the way, as we go through the budget, there will be two items that I'll request that we deal with in camera. One will be the item of security. In my view it's inappropriate to deal with that in the public forum. I think it's important that board members know and have an opportunity to ask questions about security, but that should be in the context of in camera. And the other would be then, personnel requests that are involved in here, that we'll deal with those in camera.

You'll see as well there, normal staff increments, cost-of-living adjustments, result in an increase of \$60,300. The Legislative Building restoration items together — these relate to *Hansard*, administration, library, and those in this budget have purely and simply to do with the restoration — come to a total of \$48,600 of additional expenditure.

All of that — and there are a number of smaller items, as you can see — in all of that then resulting in a reduced request of 43,680. And the two of them combined then, reduced request of \$50,680 from last year, and a reduced budget request of .34 per cent on a 14, nearly \$15 million budget.

So I propose then that we go through the budget page by page, dealing with security and personnel in camera. But before we start proceeding through it page by page then, let me entertain any questions or comments you may want to make on the big picture.

Mr. Whitmore: — On the big picture, item 8 under budgetary estimates, non-statutory, item 8, development of a media advertising program for the opening of the session and other opening day expenses?

The Chair: — Yes, that's right. It's not just for the opening only it has been . . . Part of what we have traditionally done is to — when the session is announced — then is to do some newspaper advertising as to how people can access the legislative channel, television, Internet, so that when the legislature is going to meet that the people of Saskatchewan will know then, how do you find that.

We will also in here, as I said before, we're adding 28 communities who will have legislature channel coverage in this proposal, in the spring session, who have not ever had it before. And so I think we have an obligation as well.

Mr. Whitmore: — So this won't be a one-time hit, this will continue to be in the budget then on an ongoing basis?

The Chair: — It is always a part of the budget. It's a standard part of what we feel is our responsibility to communicate to Saskatchewan.

Mr. Whitmore: — But it's new this year as an increase though, for it to be added to the budget.

The Chair: — This will relate to . . . This is the total amount. The approach . . . so it's an increase because it's the total, but the approach previously has been in-house . . . provision of members . . . posters to members and that sort of thing, which we will also do to assist members in communicating to their constituents that the legislature is going to be meeting and here's how you can follow it through the Internet or on your television, that sort of thing.

I'm advised, Mr. Whitmore, that the advertising is \$9,300 of the total; other opening day expenses is 200 of the total. They'll be broken down as we go through.

Mr. Whitmore: — The other one, it begs the question: statutory estimates, item 5, correction of calculation error.

The Chair: — Right. That's, as I said before, the . . .

Mr. Whitmore: — It's stepped out so . . .

The Chair: — Oh I'm sorry. Yes, we had made an error that we neglected to catch last year related to the constituency assistants for members. And it directly related to the fact that we did not catch, when we were presenting it, that the number of members had reduced from 66 to 58. This is money that was not expended in the current budget and that we've . . . in telling you, in reporting to you the difference, we simply report to you you're going to see a reduction there. The reason is because we caught an error that we didn't spend but it will . . . without explanation, it looks as though somehow we reduced the amount available to members for constituencies as of \$84,000.

Now in fact that is provided by statutory requirement. So in fact it would have been impossible to have spent more than is actually required because that's done by statutory requirement.

Mr. Whitmore: — And to be clear again, on the decreases under 1, CPA (Commonwealth Parliamentary Association), was a one-time hit.

The Chair: — That's right, yes.

Mr. Whitmore: — Security was a one-time hit.

The Chair: — That's right.

Mr. Whitmore: — And the air-conditioning unit was a one-time hit from last year's budget.

The Chair: — Yes, that's right.

Okay, anything else on the big picture that you want to talk about? And I think it's useful, if you want, to spend a bit of time on the big picture, because as you go through these things item by item, they end up being divided between the different departmental areas. And I think from the point of view of the board, your concern will obviously be the total support of the function of parliamentary democracy to the Legislative Assembly, obviously.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes. I'd just, Mr. Chair, like to recognize that you have achieved savings. We keep hearing that technology is supposed to provide savings but it seems that it seldom ever does. So I'd just like to congratulate broadcast services and *Hansard* for actually achieving savings through use of improved technology. That makes it worth the investment then.

The Chair: — Yes. And again I add to that, with the increase of access by the public. Which I think has always been the high priority objective of this board, to facilitate not only the function of parliamentary democracy but the access of the citizens to the process.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The other comment I'll make, because I think the 1 per cent cost of living is likely a bit low, but I think that's good to go a bit on the low side because I think there's still a need for a restraint in those areas. And I think we will see that that's probably a bit low but not much, and I think it's a good place to go. So I also commend you on not getting overly ambitious there.

The Chair: — Well, we're not just plucking the numbers out of the air. We're dealing with statistical data provided to us, and we think it's accurate, and we do it on a year-by-year comparison. Thank you.

Anything else on the big picture that you would like to raise? Okay. Shall we proceed then, walking through the budgetary proposal page by page? And I think this has been provided to you in advance, and what we'll do to make most cost-effective use of the time here that you have is I'll rely, as we go through this, on your questions that you would like to ask for matters that may not be clear to you.

You see then on page 2, the budgetary expenditure broken down by office or category, so each of these will have its own section within the budget. And then on page 3 you see the conclusion of the budgetary and then the statutory requirements of our budget. And you will note that in reality in terms of this budget, about 65 per cent of it — nearly two-thirds of it — is statutory.

Okay. I don't know if . . . are there any questions you would have about any of those office-by-office summaries? If not, then let us proceed then through them item by item.

You will see on page 1 then the personnel summary. You can certainly feel free to question here if you like. The part that I would insist that we deal with in camera would be personnel proposals.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm wondering if Gwenn could give us an overview as to the number of employees in the Legislative Assembly Office and the developments, say in the past five, six years in terms of the number of permanent, the number of part-time, and sort of how that has evolved.

Ms. Ronyk: — What I can give you, I would . . . In order to do a real comparison from say five years ago, I would want to check the records. What I can give you is that our permanent numbers in the Legislative Assembly that we actually pay right now is a total of 52 people, and that includes in the caucuses and also the Assembly branches proper; 52 people there. The numbers in the caucuses that are in that number are 11, so our permanent staff is 41 at the moment.

And our non-permanent staff is where we've seen the greatest increase in recent years. Not, again, in the Assembly proper, because that's been fairly standard with *Hansard* at about 35 — these are part-time people that work really a few hours a day, a few months of the year. There are 35 people there.

Visitor services, our guides there, part time as well and only part of the year. Several of them are seasonal; some are during the tourist season — a total of six there in visitor services.

Seven non-perms in security, which are our protective staff that are here during the session only, around the Chamber.

Legislative Library has seven non-permanent positions but only a very few hours, because they are students and so they don't work a lot of hours.

The other non-permanent people we have are five in the Clerk's office that are pages, and of course they are only sessional. And again we have some in the caucuses — five, six, seven, eight, non-perm . . . eleven non-perms in the caucuses, for a total there of 167. And we do all of the personnel for all of these people. The 167 comes largely from the constituency assistants and we have seen a large increase in that in recent years, from 90 last year — or two years ago — to 125 now, because Revenue Canada's rules now require that even people who are . . . work on a very part-time basis or for short hours must be on a payroll system to have the proper deductions taken at source. And that's why we've seen the increase there to 125.

So our total for 1998 for perm and non-perm people — now these aren't full time — are 278. We can't give you the full-time equivalents because . . . well we can for everyone else but the constituency assistants. If you exclude them and we look at all of our permanent and non-perm positions in a total of 207 as of April '97, that gives us full-time equivalents of 76 people. That's across the whole organization including the caucuses.

Now how that has changed since five years ago . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Gwenn, maybe . . . I'm really not that interested, I guess, in the bigger picture. What I'd like to know, just in terms of the Legislative Assembly Office — I mean the Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk, the library. I'd like to know sort of where the . . . I'm looking here on page 1, Legislative Assembly for '97-8, you've got 17 and a request of 18 permanent employees for '98-99; the Legislative Library is 15 and 15; the Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk, two and two.

And I guess what I'd like to know is, sort of how that has progressed over the last five years under those subheadings.

Ms. Ronyk: — As of May 1990 these similar categories that you see here on page 1 would have had us at . . . The library has increased by one permanent position from . . . it was 14 in 1990 and is now 15; Legislative Counsel, no change; Clerk's office, no change; financial services and admin, Assembly admin if you want to put that category at the top there, that's where we will have seen some change due to just our increase in administration due to McDowell and previous things that had happened in years before that.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — So McDowell really has put some administration pressures on your office then. How many FTE's (full-time equivalents) would that have created?

Ms. Ronyk: — It was a combination of many things. McDowell was partly offset by the decrease in members from 66 to 58, but we didn't see the savings from that decrease because of McDowell and the combination of quite a variety of other factors. But I think we detailed . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — So really what we did then, a lot of the cost savings in your office with respect of the cost of 66 members as opposed to 58 members, was somewhat absorbed by . . .

A Member: — More than.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — More than absorbed.

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm wondering if you could put that . . . I find this interesting to me because, you know, we all expected that there were going to be some incremental costs with the process recommended by the McDowell commission on how members are paid and the accountability process, but I wouldn't have assumed that it would have absorbed that much. I wouldn't have thought that it cost that much. Is there a way to put that in a dollar figure?

Ms. Ronyk: — Well we can see what we can pull together for you. Because as I said, there were a number of factors operating in the last five years or so, and not least was the amount of work the board has done in changing members' remuneration and directives in the last seven or eight years.

It doesn't just kind of happen with a decision; it takes a lot of work, a lot of planning, a lot of drafting of options and proposals and directive amendments and so on, and it's taken a lot of Marilyn's time, a lot of my time, a lot of Janis's time, so

that then the work that they should be doing has to get done by somebody else. And so it's had those kinds of pressures. Just the fact of changing, even aside from what the changes were, has caused pressures in the admin side.

And there in the personnel side, there have been a lot of changes in benefit programs and policies that have meant that our basic personnel operations have been done by one person in the clerical for ever, and we've just got to the point where that was totally impossible.

And last year the board has provided us with additional, I think, two positions to assist in that area. So that's why you see this year in the page 1 increase, the increase from the positions approved last year was 12. And what we're doing is asking to convert some of the non-perm positions that you gave us last year to perm. So that's . . . we're not asking for any new positions this year but we're asking for the conversion of three non-perm to perm.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — How many non-permanent did we give you last year?

The Chair: — Before, if I may add too, Mr. Lautermilch, before moving to this, talking in terms of personnel and implications of McDowell, to say what I've said to this board a number of times before, and I know it has been a priority of the board to increase accountability and everybody has supported that, but we should not make any confusion that accountability is cheap.

And part of the consequence of increasing accountability is the matters involved in processing all of that additional paperwork, which is appropriate, and has been approved by this board, and so you take the additional paperwork that's related to accountability for members and their offices and you multiply that by 58, tells you the . . . because that's all got to be dealt with by the Legislative Assembly administration.

So I'm just . . . I think it is important to make that point. Accountability is not cheaper, accountability is more expensive. It meets the priority or the principle of accountability but reduces your satisfaction with the financial implications.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay, thank you. In terms of . . . how many part-time did we approve last year?

Ms. Ronyk: — Last year we were given . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Or temporary, I guess it would have been. Wouldn't it have been . . . they were full-time temporary, weren't they?

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes, they were non-perm. Not all full-time but mostly were. Two positions in personnel and admin, and two positions in financial services, both non-perm. One was non-perm and one was made perm. Two non-perm last year in financial services.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay, so there was four.

Ms. Ronyk: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And those are full-time temporary? My terminology . . .

Ms. Ronyk: — All but one are full-time.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay, so you had three full-time and one part-time.

Ms. Ronyk: — One three-quarter-time, so close to . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Three-quarter-time, okay. And you're asking for a conversion this year then of three?

Ms. Ronyk: — We're having difficulty filling the more senior level positions because they're non-perm. And we would like to convert them to perms so that we can attract somebody with the relevant government experience in personnel and financial administration to the positions.

And the third one that we're asking to convert from non-perm to perm is our computer analyst, that we have a little more . . . The actual personnel request gives you a little more detail there of . . .

The Chair: — Okay, good. Yes. We'll deal with that, specifically, in camera because I think that's the proper place to deal with personnel.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — No. I just wanted an overview of where we had gone with our temporaries the last year to this year.

Ms. Ronyk: — The other conversion that we're asking for is in *Hansard*. And it's a 25-year employee who has been non-permanent for 25 years and she's working full time the last 10 years or so. It's not been her desire to be permanent and so we hadn't, but the time has come now that we need to do that. It doesn't make any cost difference, basically.

The Chair: — Okay. Is there anything else on the personnel summary page, page 1? If not, then if we'll move along to page 2, which is your Board of Internal Economy, and you see that before you in summary on page 2 with detail on page 3. Are there any questions you wish to ask related to either of those pages? They both deal with the same item.

Mr. Kowalsky: — When I looked at your page 1, you mentioned the cost-of-living increase was applied to indemnities and I take it that means also salaries, does it not?

And then I look at, for example, Legislative Counsel, an increase of 7 per cent.

The Chair: — Which page are you on? You're on page . . .

Mr. Kowalsky: — Well on page 2, for Legislative Counsel. You have an increase of 7 per cent.

The Chair: — Oh, are you on sum 2 or . . .

Mr. Kowalsky: — Sum 2.

The Chair: — Sum 2, sorry, okay.

A Member: — Are we on a different page?

Mr. Kowalsky: — Are we on a different page than sum 2?

The Chair: — I'm up on page . . . There's those three summary pages at the beginning. I'm on real 2, but if you want to go back to summary 2, we can do that. You're on sum 2?

Mr. Kowalsky: — Yes.

The Chair: — Okay. Could you repeat that again. I wasn't following the question because I was on a different page.

Mr. Kowalsky: — The percentage listed for . . . percentage increase for Legislative Counsel, which is 7 per cent. And I'd just like an explanation of that.

The Chair: — Sure.

Ms. Ronyk: — If I may explain, Mr. Kowalsky. What we are asking for in Legislative Counsel is a one-fifth-time person, temporary hours to 50 hours a month. A month? Days. Sorry, 50 days in a year. And it is just to help with some of the more junior clerical work so that the one person in the office, the one support person, can focus on more senior responsibilities that are there. What we see we're going to do with this one-fifth-time person is train them to do some of the very time-consuming things, like update the statutes that this office does for many offices throughout the building. It's a very time-consuming thing, and it's important that it be done accurately.

But that . . . if we can focus on . . . It doesn't need to be a highly paid person, it just needs to be someone who we can train and rely on to do that. This person then will also provide back-up for the office, which has had none. When the current support person goes on holidays the Law Clerk is left with no support whatsoever. Or if she's sick and if it's during session, we're really up a creek. So this will provide us with some relief and some help in the junior clerical areas. So it's a \$6,000 request there in temporary salaries.

The Chair: — You'll find that detailed in more detail later. Does that answer your question, Mr. Kowalsky?

Mr. Kowalsky: — It does, and it does it very well too.

The Chair: — Okay, good. All right, if I can get us to leap ahead to pages 2 and 3 again then, and if there's any questions you wanted to ask related to that. If not, then we'll move to page 4, general administration, which you see in summary. And then falls in more detail, broken down by office. Anything on the general administration summary, page 4?

If not then we'll move to page 5. Within general administration, the Assembly administration, again in summary for Assembly administration. Any questions there? And then the detail on Assembly administration begins on page 6 then. And all of these will follow the similar outlines: personal services; contractual services; advertising, printing, publishing; travel and business; supply and services; material and . . . or equipment and fixed assets. Okay.

Are there, in any of those pages, 6, 7, and 8, which are the detail then of Assembly administration.

Mr. Whitmore: — The CVA vehicle under 442, page 7.

The Chair: — On where? On page . . .

Mr. Whitmore: — Page 7.

The Chair: — Number?

Mr. Whitmore: — 442. Just the . . . It'd gone from 00 to 7,000, so that's why it caught me all of a sudden.

The Chair: — Yes. This was before you came on, actually goes back in history to a time before you were on the board, Mr. Whitmore. There was a time — how many years ago? — three years ago . . . It has always been a provision to the Clerk as the, quote, deputy minister of the Legislative Assembly, some of the deputy ministers in line departments, to have the provision of a vehicle.

And several years ago, the Clerk opted to take a travel, a small travel allowance in lieu of the vehicle. Quite frankly, some of the vehicles were less than roadworthy and not very desirable and I don't blame her a bit. And it was the commitment of the board at that time to acknowledge that it is an entitlement of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, as it is for a deputy minister of a line department, to have the vehicle available and the Clerk has chosen to reactivate. So that's what that directly relates to.

Mr. Whitmore: — You know, any time I see something that moves from zero zero then jumps, you'll find that I'll ask a question.

The Chair: — Yes, something is always more than nothing. There's no doubt about that. Yes, and you'll notice then on no. 193, that there's something goes to nothing — so it goes the other direction. And that's . . . so you have to look at 193 and 422 in combination to see the total picture as it relates to the Clerk. So net . . . yes, so up sixty-nine sixty, down 1,200. Okay.

Anything else then related to Assembly administration, pages 6, 7 and 8?

Mr. Whitmore: — And we broke more china, I see.

The Chair: — Well if we could put the china and the silverware on chains. And no, some of it is replacement. I'm being facetious here; I should ought not to do that. But it's just wear and tear mostly.

Anything else in administration? Okay, you're comfortable to move along?

8.1 and 8.2 are supplementary to those, some of your background information related to our computerization of services. Is there any question on the backgrounder, the 8.1 or 8.2?

And then you see on page 9, you'll find then the personnel and that would conclude administration then.

If you're ready to move along to caucus administration, okay. You see on page 10 caucus administration in summary, which follows in detail then on pages 11 and 12 with personnel to follow. On page 11 and 12, are there any questions that you have? If not then you'd find on page 13 the summary of those personnel; those are the people who are showing up in the caucuses of course. These are assigned to your caucus and paid through the Legislative Assembly. Any questions there?

Okay. We'll then move to constituency office administration on page 14 and you'll see the summary page there followed by more detail on pages 15 and 16. When caucus . . . sorry, constituency office administration. Any questions there? Very little, nothing changes there.

Mr. Whitmore: — . . . 33 per cent?

The Chair: — Yes. And this is related to directive, to the usage of directive 24 is where that provides the equipment in the constituency offices based on uptake on that so far and then the reduced amount available for members, I think is summarized — why there's a slight reduction there. Okay, anything else in constituency office?

Okay, then we'll move to page 17, charges to the Legislative Assembly Office. These are SPMC expenditures. Any questions there? And if I can just . . . yes, if you want to find out when Marian was referring previously to the reduction of rent in . . . related to library storage, 220 is your item there that gives you that specific. That's where it shows up in this budget. Okay, so that saving of \$10,000 on that space. And then on contractual services, 220 did not increase then, correspondingly. Okay, and you've dealt with those in your . . . The benefits of those flow out of the special warrant approval.

Okay, Legislative Assembly Office, page 18, you see in total summary there, that being a reduction. And then within there we will move to each of the items. Any questions in the overall?

On page 19, the Clerk's office; again a reduction there. You see it in summary there with detail in pages 20, 21, 22, and then personnel on page 23. So let me refer you to those pages 21 to 20 . . . sorry, 20 to 22, the detail. Any questions? If not, then page 23 is where you find the personnel summarized for you.

And then we move along to *Hansard* then, which you see in summary page 24; again another reduction in total, and with the detail in pages 25, 26, and personnel found on page 27. On the expenditures, 25, 26, any questions there? If not, then to personnel, page 27.

Moving along to broadcasting, with your summary on page 28; again another reduction. Let me on here refer you to item no. 2 to just give you a bit of an explanation on contractual services. And this is to alert you, not in this budget, but to the . . . what to expect in years to come. We're budgeting here for some contractual services to seek technical advice regarding the improvement of both audio and video, which would be within the Chamber. But more to the point, converting to digital format — am I using the correct terminology? — of the audio for the signal out of the Legislative Assembly.

This is again part of getting a grip on the continuing

advancements of technology and will result with some recommendations. We've had no changes for about 20 years; so it's been 20 years since our audio has had any attention and I do want to just give you advance notice that this is something that you will be seeing coming back in future years, and we're taking advantage this year of some of our savings in the reduction of our contract to seek some expertise, advice, which we will use to take advantage, to make proposals into the future dealing with the . . . again this will have to do with the general category of access to the public — by the public I should say — to Legislative Assembly proceedings.

You will see then on the detail of broadcasting on pages 29 and 30. Any questions there? Okay. Then we will move to visitor services. You have your summary on page 31. This one is a very small increase. You have your detailed pages, 32 and 33 and 34 with personnel on page 35. So on the detail on pages 32 to 34 are there any questions there? Okay.

Personnel on page 35. Any questions? All right.

If not, then we will move along to the Office of the Sergeant-at-Arms, which is another reduction. Summary on page 36. And detail pages 37, 38, with personnel on page 39. First of all the detail on page 37, 38. Any questions there? And page 39, personnel. Any questions there?

And appreciate as we go through these, a number of the things that we've dealt with on these in terms of changes, we dealt with in our overall summary, but make sure you have opportunity to ask specific questions if there's any that aren't clear to you.

We'll then move to Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk, page 40, with a summary there. Page 40, and the detail pages, 41, 42. And, Mr. Kowalsky, I refer you on page 41 under personal services, to line 141, which is the specific answer to the question that you asked before. Okay. That tells you precisely how that figure was arrived at then for that temporary assistance there.

Any other detail questions on page 41 and 42, Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk? Okay.

We can then move to the Legislative Library, which will have an overall increase as you're aware, largely flowing out of the . . . well in fact entirely flowing out of the renovations or restoration, I should say. And then you have the summary on page 43, and the detail on pages 44, 45, and 46 with the personnel on 47. Are there any questions on the details of 44, 5, or 6?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — On page 45.

The Chair: — Sure.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — This is I think a perennial . . .

The Chair: — As the geese fly south in the winter.

Mr. Whitmore: — If he didn't show up, I thought I was going to do it.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Marian, I'm wondering if we could at least hold '98-99 expenditures for travel to the . . . I mean to the '96-7 actual? Or even 7-8 estimates?

Ms. Powell: — Sure, I'll tell you what's changed. For many years, when we had our library operating system — or NOTIS (Northwestern Online Total Integrated System) system — we annually sent a staff member to the NOTIS Users Group. This is our library automating system. Now we're moving into a new automating system called Endeavor and that was in the special warrant information.

The last three years we have not had to budget for a users group conference because our old NOTIS system was not being upgraded and we didn't need our professional to be on top of what was happening to the system. This year we're implementing a brand-new system and we have to add that conference in again.

So basically what we've tried to do here is keep it at last year, with the same conference as otherwise, but we must be able to send somebody regularly to the new system users group. And that's the difference.

We were lucky. We were able to go three years without having to deal with it and so we were sort of able to keep it in line.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — So what you're saying is then that there's really nothing that you can take from your '98-99 request?

Ms. Powell: — Well certainly, I mean we could take one of the existing conferences. I guess the thing I'm alerting you to is that this will be here every year and it means . . . We do have seven professionals. In order to keep on top for our work we must make sure that they all get to go to something at least every second year. That's not really very satisfactory because as you know, in information technology it's moving pretty fast, and this year we've had to add this new conference.

Now we'd certainly be prepared to remove one of the regular conferences. The impact is though, only one person will ever go to the users group. This is our specialist in our system and it means the rest of our professionals are then reduced in their opportunities to be able to keep on top.

The Chair: — I think it's important as well to look at training in the library in the context of the library and its responsibilities.

This is, in some ways, a specialist library because it's a Legislative Library and we don't have any others of those in the province. And so in the context of the total responsibilities of the library, it is extremely difficult — I mean, I don't know if it's impossible — but extremely difficult to have our Legislative Library staff continue to upgrade their professional expertise without participating in these kinds of training opportunities that are geared to that use. And this becomes one of the obligations of staying current in your provision of services in the information technology world, when you're unique within the province.

Ms. Powell: — It might be useful to note — it always looks

like we do a lot and there's no question that we need to know these things — other libraries in Regina, in the province, don't send just one person to a conference.

We have consistently gone only to conferences . . . We may budget for these, but if they're not any good we don't send anybody and the money is therefore not spent. Our staff are extremely committed. They cover their own cancellation insurance because government policy is not to cover that now. They share accommodation with a number of delegates, not usually just one, to cut the housing costs. They stay with relatives. So we try to support them in this because it is so important in the work that they do.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — On your staff summary, I see you've got an increase in your temporary and sessional from 1.5 to 2.04.

Ms. Powell: — Yes, and that staff increase is entirely devoted to a shipping and receiving clerk at the lowest level, to deal with daily shipments from what we must plan to be . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — For the move.

Ms. Powell: — An outside location for support services.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay, good.

The Chair: — Okay. Any other questions on page 44, 5, 6, or 7?

If not, you'll move along then to committee support services. And these are . . . We'll deal with . . . you have them in summary there and then we'll deal with them committee by committee if you wish.

So you'll see the summary there which is again a forecast for reduction. And then as we go through if there's any questions or comments you may want to make — and, hon. members, in this regard if you do have comments they are particularly appreciated — if you see reason to believe that our budgetary assumptions here don't reflect what is the political plan of the legislature regarding the use of legislative committees.

You'll see on page 49 then, Special Committee on Regulations, Standing Committee on Crown Corporations. Standing Committee on Public Accounts, page 50. And also on page 50, other committees. Are there any questions or comments you want to make on any of those?

Okay. Then if you . . . we'll move to page 51, which is indemnity, allowances, and expenses to members, and represents an overall increase of .07 per cent.

Mr. Whitmore: — Decrease.

The Chair: — I'm sorry, a decrease, overall decrease of .07 per cent. Thanks, Mr. Whitmore. Okay. There's your summary. As you move to page 52 then, indemnity, allowances, and expenses to members — summary. And then with detail on pages 53 and 4. A statutory there, okay.

Members' committee expenses, page 55. And again, a very

small increase. Again, we're making some assumptions about the use of committees. That's what will be the total determiner here and you see that on page 55, the summary, with the detail on pages 56 and 7. And again, if you have any comments you want to make there, if you feel that the assumptions made don't accurately reflect what you anticipate the Legislative Assembly's desire to use those committees being, it would be helpful to note that now.

Any questions or comments there? Okay. Then moving to page 58, the third party caucus and office of the third party. And there is a slight increase here because the third party is a larger caucus than the third party was in the last budget. So that's why that's reflected here.

The government caucus then, on page 59. The good news in the world of expenditures is that when cabinet increases the caucus shrinks. And so the funding to the government caucus, because of the change in cabinet, is actually reduced there to reflect that then, government caucus funding.

Then moving to the opposition caucus and Office of the Leader of the Opposition, and again you see here a reduction, which reflects the fact that the opposition caucus in this fiscal year is smaller than the opposition caucus was in the previous fiscal year.

As I say, these are all statutory and they are totally dependent on the make-up of the Legislative Assembly. Moving then to the office of the independent member, or in this case now, members, and you see an increase there, which is related purely and simply to the fact that there are now three independent members as opposed to one in the previous fiscal year.

Mr. Whitmore: — Just to question in that area, and not knowing that yet, do each of the independent members, are they sharing offices in terms of the building or they all have separate offices and separate staff or what's the arrangement there?

The Chair: — Their arrangements are, in terms of staffing, are their own authority and not directed or administered by the Legislative Assembly. And each are provided separate offices in the building and each are provided a . . . what's provided to an independent member is a half-time secretary during the time that the House sits.

Mr. Whitmore: — There is no problem then of continuing with the individual offices with the renovation to the building? There'll still be space available?

The Chair: — That's still accommodated and it would be . . . I think that has always been sort of an operating assumption as restoration was anticipated, that the presence of all elected members in this building, I don't think was ever even up for consideration that that would change. On that point by the way, that's certainly not standard across the country.

Mr. Whitmore: — No, I understand that. That's why I asked the question.

The Chair: — But it . . . there's a matter of principle here in terms of equitable treatment of members and access to the chambers. And that then concludes the expenditure side of the

budget proposal.

We will move to page 1 of the revenue side and that's all there is. This is not . . . there's not a long list here. And as you can see, we anticipate the sale of a hot item of *Hansard* will be somewhat reduced, so the revenue side, \$18,000 is the forecast on the revenue side with the detail. And I guess it's really . . . it's not the hot item of *Hansard*, I stand corrected. It's the hot item of Bills, which are also available on the Internet. So the users of that service . . . of course we're seeing less revenue on that side because they don't need to contact us and have it sent to them and all that. They can just look it up in their own offices and have it.

I'm advised however, the reduction is to the lost revenue of the *Hansards*. So there's the downside. However it's strongly offset, in my view, strongly offset by the marked increase of access that people of Saskatchewan have.

We were one of the later jurisdictions, in Saskatchewan, to come onto the Internet. And that's not always bad news. It meant we were able to actually do more with less, I think, and would have what would probably, I'm confident, would be considered one of, if not the best, Internet access to legislative proceedings that our citizens have as a result of the site that we have and its continuous updating. We get a number of positive comments regularly.

Well I guess I can only say — yes I guess I can — ladies and gentlemen of the board, that concludes then our review of the expenditure estimate for the Legislative Assembly and do we want to deal with the motion now or do you want to take a recess?

Mr. Whitmore: — I would suggest that we take a 15-minute recess at this time. Some members have been called out of the room for a few minutes so . . .

The Chair: — Right. Now do you want to do the in camera items before the recess? We've got, I said, security. I asked you to save any questions you have relating to security and personnel. Do you want to do that before we take a recess?

A Member: — I think we should go ahead with it and do it because we'll be running out of time otherwise.

The Chair: — Let's do the in camera and then recess?

Okay. So that probably means that we'll ask everyone to clear the room then and we're probably looking at about a half-hour there, in that neck of the woods.

The meeting continued in camera.

The Chair: — If we can move out of meeting in camera and now return to the record for the board. The floor is open for a motion related to personnel. Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Ms. Crofford. The conversion of the four positions as recommended. You have that before you in writing. Is there any debate on the motion? If not, those in favour. Opposed? And that's carried. Thank you.

Moving to the decision item related to Speaker's office

reclassification. You have a recommendation before you. Is there a motion someone wishes to move? Mr. Whitmore; Mr. Boyd, seconded. Is there discussion? There being no discussion, those in favour please indicate. Down. Opposed. That's carried. Thank you.

Now respecting that the board would like to postpone until other matters can be dealt with with confidence before making the motion dealing with budget, I will now move us to item no. 8, which is consideration of the Provincial Auditor's memoranda on the Board of Internal Economy audits for the years ending March 31, 1996 and 1997.

And you will have under item no. 8 in your board materials those two memoranda with a draft of my response to the auditor for the items that he raises. I recommend . . . having reviewed the auditor's comments related to the Board of Internal Economy. Okay, yes, you will have . . . distribute those . . . you'll have the one dated February 27, 1997 and the auditor was hot off the mark and got us another one in November. Before the board had a chance to meet we got the second one just last week . . . oh, just yesterday —just yesterday. However, I've reviewed that as well, and that is also acknowledged in this draft that you have before you, and so what I want to recommend to you is that the board adopt the Chair's response to the auditor on behalf of the board.

There isn't anything essentially different between the second and the first reports. There are one or two items that the auditor acknowledges have in fact been addressed, and then there is a repeat of a number of items.

And so what I recommend to you is that this draft or this response be sent to the auditor by the Chair on behalf of the board.

Mr. Whitmore: — Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to first say that I concur with the comments that you're putting forward in terms of your draft document and reply to the auditor's report.

I did not receive his first report until, I think, yesterday or the day before yesterday. It was not part of the package. Then receiving the other one today, which I haven't had a chance to see, but I did happen to go through the report dated March 31, 1996, and he does make references to the changes that have taken place under McDowell.

Now it's not a recommendation, but starting on page 7, item 3.8, and going to page 8, he talks about MLA travel. And I think all parties have done a lot of work in the area of accountability and the question of travel. But under this, and I would like to read it into the record and then comment:

For travel expenses, the board now requires MLAs to submit a travel expense claim or have expenses paid directly by the board. The MLAs have described the claim period and the number of kilometres travelled. However, the board does not require MLAs to obtain board approval before each trip. The board decides to give MLAs the freedom to decide how they'll carry out their duties. The board relies on the honour system, where MLAs certify that they make a trip for the Legislative Assembly and

constituency business. As a result, the board may pay MLAs for travel expenses not incurred on Legislative Assembly or constituency business.

I'm rather disappointed by this comment. I think that we have gone a long way as a board, and as I spoke earlier, of accountability. And a statement like this, that to the degree that it states that an MLA like myself would phone to Regina first for approval to go see a constituent in the morning, in terms of something that had taken place the night before, I think the innuendo, also here, in terms of MLAs for travel expenses not incurred by Legislative Assembly and constituency business, I feel is . . . To me, I was insulted by it. And I thought we had gone a long ways on this.

And I would certainly question whether managers within the civil service are required to ask permission if they drive to a certain location in this province to deal with a situation, whether they have to phone for prior approval.

Or even to this extent, one would say, when you go to visit a constituent that you have to require that constituent to sign a piece of paper saying that's where you've been. And I think a statement like this really limits the freedom of MLAs in order to conduct their work as elected officials. And I'm trying to be very calm here, because as I said, it really hurt when I saw this.

I know for myself, I have a vehicle — certainly not a new vehicle — that I primarily use for MLA work. Am very careful in terms of outlining the mileage that is done on that, as other MLAs are doing, in terms of following with this new recording procedure and doing a good job at it. And the staff is doing a good job of dealing with the extra paperwork that we've outlined here.

But I would certainly like to see a reply from the auditor; why he made such a statement and why he then includes . . . then insinuates that paying for unnecessary travel or travel that's not eligible . . . Because I think it's a slight on all of us in the House. Thank you.

The Chair: — I certainly understand the point you're making, Mr. Whitmore. And it is out of respect for the kinds of principles that you are referring to, and recognizing the extreme importance for members in performance of their duties to be able to maintain a fair level of confidentiality in the interest of their constituents, or citizens of Saskatchewan, in performance of their duties, that I responded to this as I did in the draft. I'll draw your attention to my response to this category, where I propose in the letter that it include, and I quote:

You note that the board must ensure that members and caucuses are accountable for the use of the resources provided to them. Following input from members and the public through the independent committee in the past two years, the board has implemented many new rules and procedures to ensure accountability.

Just as an aside, by the way, I would highly compliment all members, and in particular members of the Board of Internal Economy, for actions taken in that regard. Again I quote:

In the main, these adopt government standards for levels of

expense remuneration and accountability. However, (and I emphasize the however) it is necessary to respect the need for an appropriate level of confidentiality respecting members' activities and relationships with constituents, for example in travel details, as opposed to the degree of direct supervision that is typical between a manager and employee in a government function.

And so I would hope that that paragraph would accurately reflect the response of the board members to that particular point raised in the auditor's report.

Is there any further discussion? If not, I recommend to you a motion that the draft response to the Provincial Auditor's memoranda be approved and that the Chair forward it to the Office of the Provincial Auditor.

If someone would wish to move that, or some other motion. You'll move that, Mr. Kowalsky? Is there a seconder? Mr. Whitmore. Discussion on the motion? Those in favour then please indicate. Down. Opposed? And that's carried. Thank you.

Final item, and this is a decision item, employee and family assistance plan for members, and we have . . . (inaudible) . . . there is a one page hand-out. Okay, let me give you a verbal report. I apologize for what I'm going to say verbally not being in print. What is being handed out is a description of the employee and family assistance program for members of the Legislative Assembly. And as members of the board will know, I had, on a temporary basis, included members of the Legislative Assembly in that plan. It's a minimal cost. The cost is . . . I don't have it front of me the exact amount; it's something less than \$2,000 per year.

There are two options for employee family assistance program for members of the legislature. One is to continue as we are now, with the availability of that support for our members and their families in dealing with crises through the Legislative Assembly plan that you have before you. Another option would be to request the Speaker to propose an independent . . . an outside is probably a better word, an outside plan for board members.

Having done some review of that and given consideration, primarily because I think the level of service would be identical whichever way members go, but that in my judgement the level of confidentiality available to members is slightly higher by continuing with the Legislative Assembly Office plan. That is what I recommend to the members of the board.

So there would be either of those options available if . . . and I can propose a motion for either one of them if you indicate to me what your preference is.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, my preference would be to maintain a level of confidentiality, because as we know it's not a totally kind world out there and we're particularly susceptible to public scrutiny and to vulnerability and I think that the extra effort is required.

The Chair: — Okay. Perhaps I can recommend wording for a motion that you may wish to move:

That in keeping with standard policies in government and business, members and their families be eligible to participate in the Legislative Assembly employees and family assistance plan.

Do you wish to move that?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'll move that now.

The Chair: — Okay, is there a seconder? Mr. Lautermilch. Is there discussion on the motion? Those in favour then? Opposed? And that's also carried unanimously.

I've had some indication from members you have commitments and it may be that . . . Members have given notice already that you intend to meet again relatively soon to deal with the auditor's budget, to finalize decisions in the Legislative Assembly budget. There may be some things you might be wanting to do in terms of updating directives that affect the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have not had opportunity to deal with in this meeting. Having had some experience with the McDowell commission and the reports and directives flowing out of that, it is the view of the Chair that there are some things that should ought to be . . . should be remedied. And I would ask that you consult with your caucus members and give some consideration to those items that they have raised with you and with me; and that you consider remedying those difficulties for members, and that would take directive decision items.

If there's nothing else, then the meeting of the board stands adjourned until the call of the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank Gwenn and her staff for the work that they do during the year and the support that they give us as members of the legislature. We really do appreciate all of your service. Sometimes we may not show it, and particularly when the session is on we get a little short around here, I think all of us.

And so we hope you will continue to put up with our silliness, when we get in our silly moods, understanding that we do appreciate the work you do.

Ms. Ronyk: — We all understand.

The Chair: — But your comments are appreciated. Thanks very much, folks.

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.